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HYMNS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Hymn of the Day of the Lord

The day of the Lord, as comes a robber in the night, so cometh.
When men are saying, "All is peace and safety!"
Then on a sudden destruction looms over them,
As the birth-pang of a travailing woman:
There shall be no escape for them—none!

Hymn of the Watchers

Not of the night are we, nor of the gloom!
Oh, then, let us not sleep, as do other men;
But let us keep vigil and be sober.

* * * * *

Hymn of the Change

All of us, with face unveiled
Gazing on the mirrored glory of our Lord,
Are hourly being transformed into the same likeness,
From a mere reflected glory into an inherent glory,
As may well be, since it proceeds from the Lord, the Spirit.

From *The Letters of St. Paul*, translated by A. S. Way.

FOR LACK OF PREFACE

My dear A——,

I have acceded to F.'s wish to publish the letters I have written to you, although you decline to print your side of the correspondence on the plea—to put it briefly—that your arguments are too well known, too orthodox, in fact, to need fresh expression. It will appear ungracious on my part thus to publish my criticism of you without your defence, without your counter-criticism of me. Yet I think the sympathy of the reader may turn to you all the more because you do not appear in the public court to defend yourself, and my title draws attention to the fact

that you might say much for yourself which does not here appear.

No, of course I did not expect you to change your views and model them on mine; neither did you wish to transform me. We have not been playing a game of ninepins; we neither of us expected to see each other's opinions go down with a clatter every time we rolled a true ball. Why, then, have we been preaching at one another? The answer probably is that all expression of this sort is forced by some urgency within that does not stay for any nice calculation of results.

Yours as ever,

B——.

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LETTER I

Introductory.

It is very kind of you to laud my generosity in giving you a small cheque for the building of your parish room. You say, "Considering that your income is small, and other calls upon it many, etc." I really might have felt saintly when reading this had not the opposite fact stared me uncomfortably in the face. My income, which you in your kindness so slightingly apprize, is really very large compared with other people's, because I find it does almost everything I want, and theirs does not. I have my full share of the feast of life, for I am always well fed and warmed, and have plenty of energy for my kind of sport.

But now, having rejected your genial

praise, I am going to make you a fair offer; and let it be understood that our friendship will not alter whether you accept or decline. A little sum of about fifty pounds has been put at my disposal to give away—the gift is not mine, merely the disposing of it; and I propose, on a certain harrowing condition, to offer it to you entire for your building. The condition is, that I may write to you as often as may be until next year, and tell you exactly what I think of your doctrine and ministry, you taking these letters in good part, and answering them with equal candour whenever you like. You tell me that the small sum I have given you has saved you "an enormous lot of begging," so I hope that my present offer, if accepted, would save you more time than it claimed. Look before you leap! I shall be quite cheerfully brutal in my growls and barks at you. A young man like you, just installed in that rare old vicarage, looking out of stone mullions at a garden brimful of flowers, has surely enough to

cheer him through the hardships of such an encounter. Besides, you know I would not give you the money did I not think well of your work on the whole. But further reflections upon my illiberal offer I leave to you.

Do not tell your wife of my proffered barbarity—she would become my enemy; but merely pat that roguish baby of yours on the head and pull the ears of your dog, on my behalf. Or, if you tell your wife, bid her reflect that you have preached to me twice a week all summer, when I could not answer; now I, who am much older and more versed in the world, ask only to preach to you once a week, and you are at liberty to answer.

LETTER II

THE excellent courage with which you tell me to fire away would make me quite cheerful if you had not accompanied it with such unfeigned depreciation of your personal character and acquirements, and of your efforts in the parish and pulpit. I will not flatter you by stating my honest opinion on these matters, and as I have promised to dissemble no more for some months I am obliged to drop the subject. It is your theories of creed and practice, the general atmosphere of ideas that you share with many of your class, about which I am going to play the sort of friend from whom Canning prayed to be defended. It is the excellence of the mere "you," fighting in what seems to me cumbrous armour

A good soldier fighting under bad conditions.

and with a bad jousting procedure, that makes me feel sorry to see the devil with a most unnecessary advantage.

One must always pause nowadays to define that word "devil." There are several of him. There is the devil of whom we are all better for having "a spice"; there is the devil to whom my good old Admiral sends his servants on every occasion; and there is the devil proper to devotion. One hears much discussion as to whether this devil of devotion is personal or not! However he may feel "in himself" (as the country folk say) he is certainly reported to be exceedingly personal in his attentions. The devil of whom I would speak here, however, is a public character, for under his name I group all the forces which make for racial decay. It is immaterial for our purpose whether they are marshalled and hounded on by some unseen giant of spiritual evil. They are there; they are at work and lively in your parish, as in every other, and producing national degeneration. And

Four devils.

you and I are at one in believing that Christianity is the great force of regeneration. We believe that it naturally allies itself with all that is wholesome and natural, true, strong, and really progressive in humanity, and is the animating life of these —that it is, indeed, the immortal soul of all human good, which, once born, can never die.

Much smoke, little fire.

But everywhere, and at all times, the race may be sick ; Christianity may flicker down ; the whole nation, or one parish, may degenerate ere the flame leaps and glows again in better conditions. Now, I think that you are causing the flame to flicker ; you are, in fact, pitching great hodfuls of fuel upon a fire that has not enough heat to consume them. I am not at all sure whether your fuel is not half slag—of that I am not competent to decide. What I chiefly see is that you ought to do a great deal more blowing of the fire. You are fond of the word "supernatural" ; you say frequently that Christianity is a supernatural religion.

Without stumbling over definitions, we can agree that the fire of personal religion in my figure is of God, and can by Him and in Him alone be increased. The figure of the bellows which you ought to blow must, then, represent such teaching and example as shall send the souls in your cure continually back to God within the heart; and there is no use in heaping upon the inward spark other fuel of the outward and visible sort unless the spark itself is raised to a healthy flame of inward spiritual life. When that fire burns with a steady heart of unchanging heat, we shall agree that all will be well. I may think it matters less what sort of fuel you give it; you may think that one, only one, sort will avail; but that difference is not to my point. You are producing a great deal of smoke—many services, district visiting, attendance at the Eucharist, etc.; the fires you are tending are low; my first complaint is that you are not going the right way about to mend them —and the rains and floods of a transition period are upon us.

LETTER III

No, I agree with you that transitions never come with any real suddenness; but to certain classes of the community they will always be catastrophic. I know a man of taste and intelligence, by inheritance and training very religious, who is never stirred by philosophical or critical questions or doubts concerning any underlying principle. He ignores the ferment of doubt in the schools with respect to any matter which he desires to hold as settled, and he does not believe it will ever reach the street. What then? Ferment, or leaven, is a very real force, and the results of modern doubt will come upon this man, as to his forerunners, as a surprise.[1] This man of whom I speak read

Theological outlook.

[1] "Newman was contemporary with the application (by German scholars) of historical criticism to Christian

mathematics at Cambridge; but his favourite pursuits were literary, artistic, and athletic. On cricket and sacred music he was quite an authority. On leaving the university he spent a whole year reading theology in a college which nestled in the depth of the country; then took holy orders, and some years after was presented to a living. From a child he was brought up among the prejudices of the most excellent class of landowners. These prejudices were rendered the more convincing by the modesty and altruism of particular friends who were more fortunate than he as to rank and fortune. Perhaps you know such an one, and might, indeed, give him your own name.

Well now, the chief points of my description are intelligence, education, piety, combined with a lack of any critical

origins. . . . But in his day it was generally assumed, and comfortably believed . . . that at any rate the dispute was confined to the study and could never reach the street. As a matter of fact it has reached the street and the railway bookstall" (*Christianity at the Cross Roads*, by Rev. G. Tyrrell, p. 35).

interest in bare historic facts or in the philosophy of religion. What is vital in such a man's life comes to him from knowledge neither of fact nor of theory, so that, holding sacred whatever has sacred associations, he never desires change in anything except those outward things which strike him as unbeautiful or unlovely. Well, that is all very good ; we need just such men everywhere ; but what are we to say when they stop their ears to all that hum of life that functions only for reformation in the underlying theories of social and religious activity, and oppose themselves like a dead wall to its progress ?

Intelligence combined with anti-critical temper.

The almost overwhelming temptation to such men as you—men whose temperament leads them naturally into the priesthood—is to suppose that their sense —one can hardly call it judgment—of sacred things is authoritative, and that all criticism and originality, except in the sphere of art, are forms of ungodliness.

What devastation does this unconscious assumption work! In every community there will always be men and women formed by nature to think critically when they think at all, to act as radical reformers when they act with any force, and who, when they feel God, can only feel Him as the great Innovator breaking away the shackles of past mistakes and present tyrannies. It is only the living death of indifference and inactivity that can keep this large part of the religious world patiently conformable to what is.

The priest *versus* the reformer.

My whole quarrel with you is that such ministry as yours will either weed out half humanity from the church or leave them in a living death within it.

If you lived in a city, the tyrannies of the *bourgeois* class would seem to you so unlovely that you would be keen upon some vague form of socialism, but would still desire to graft upon it an old religion. But in the country the remains of the feudal order are still lovely in your eyes.

You are not remarkable, except, perhaps, in being remarkably fortunate; I have met many parsons like you in essentials of taste and opinion, and I notice that you belong to a party that in Convocation often records an undivided vote.

LETTER IV

Oh yes, there is no question but that there are scores and hundreds of Dissenting ministers who take a more ignorant attitude toward most aspects of theological progress than you do. It is, as you say, the glory of our Anglican Church that it in practice covers a wider range of doctrine than do any of the sects, and in that sense is more truly national. But the splendid width of our Church is not reflected in that party within it to which you adhere with enthusiasm.

Our Nonconformist bodies, like all other forms of Christianity, must to-day find their machinery clogged by the crude precipitate of scholastic criticism. They cannot drive on by the mere force of their own time-

Nonconformist ministry in like case.

honoured dogmatic; they must use the strong solvent of God-given insight and spiritual power. They and you for a common ill need a common remedy.

The remedy is not to reject criticism. The outward man of our familiar theological imaginations and prejudices must perish—is perishing. We cannot help that, but if our common inward life is being renewed it is all right. I like that word "renewed."

LETTER V

No; I do not think, as you say I do, that "religion is in the melting-pot." Religion may surely be defined as walking and talking with God; and we get true or false religion—does not the course of all religious history show it?—in proportion as God or man does most of the talking. We all know that conversation may be almost a monologue. A listener, a slight gesture or murmur of response from him now and again, is all that some of our most brilliant conversationalists require; and to judge from our Christian literature, devotional and liturgic, some of our most brilliant religionists require little more from God. Yet none of us would deny that there

Religion a conversation with God.[1]

[1] I get this phrase from Professor Kirsopp Lake.

must be the other side to the religious life, that the voice of God must speak to each man as well as to the corporate soul of the church. Indeed, it would be very easy, although tedious, to gather from the religious writers of all ages and climes, more especially from the Hebrew prophets and Christian seers, eulogies of this most necessary part of prayer. Madame Guyon's *Short Method of Prayer for Simple Souls* is to be bought for sixpence. Are you prepared to cast her into that Bastille of your intellect where you keep the higher critics, and the Dissenters, and such? I think not; although you may regard her in some particulars as an extremist, you are not prepared to deny that she participated conspicuously in the secret of God that is with those that fear Him, just because she realised that the response of God is the greater part of prayer.

If we would know how the Divine Intelligence imparts Himself to the human soul, we should, no doubt, ask in vain; as we do when we ask what life is, or how

it came about that we are what we are and where we are. But that question is beside the mark. Not so the further question, what is imparted? It must be capable of an answer; and as we are Christians we may go to the human life that we hold to be the fulfilment of human ideal, our example for all time, for that answer.

God speaks to impart eternal truth.

One of the most remarkable things about the wisdom of our Lord, however we may pare it down, however we may take this and that and the other saying from it as possibly not authentic, is that it deals in great principles of thought and action, not in details—which are but the application of principles to time and place. By virtue of this fact, then, we may assume, as the first law of prayer, that the soul that listens for God will have impressed upon its very being those deep-seated principles which are the well-spring of all right, practical thought. This is surely the meaning of the figure in the fourth Gospel —streams of eternal life flow out of the

individual human life, as water from some mountain pool which has its source in a deep fastness of the rock.

Our Lord is not so unique as not to be a sample of mankind in this respect. Take a swift survey of the Hebrew prophets, of the Greek philosophers, of all that we can gather from more primitive mythologies or cults of the doctrines of Eastern sages. They, too, learned from God; what is it of all their teaching that has survived, that has any claim to be for us truth, except a few just such deep-seated principles? But to each teacher, as far as we know anything of their life and doctrine, these principles came with an individual difference, the subtle something of personality and nationality which gives the truth a new savour, which once again whets the appetite of humanity for it and causes it when eaten to become a part of the muscle of the race.

We believe that to our Lord was imparted that sum of these eternal principles of right to which we have added nothing.

As a teacher He was unique in adding to them no temporary rules. But He did not walk in oblivion of earth. He illustrated principles by those stories which prove Him a keen observer of minute details of a temporal and local sort; He expressed these stories with poetry and passion, with the brevity of wit and incomparable grace of thought. Because in each of these stories, although they have charm of detail, the point is one principle only, we are compelled to believe that it was in giving these principles a certainty, a depth, a tenderness, a vividness and power, that God spoke to His soul. It is certainly the conception of the fourth Gospel that our Lord gave men what God gave Him, accepting for the purpose our own relationship both to God and man. Do you not think that in this our experience, in our degree, is intended to be like His and like that of all religious men? A woman once told me that she had all her life had urgent reason to petition God

Each personal life must obtain vital certainties direct from God.

for two material benefits, and had never received them. Often in indignation she would demand of Heaven the reason, and listen to the silence, and try to convince herself that God was not. But, although surrounded by agnostic influences and accepting no religious authority, but for herself examining all doctrines, she was amazed to find that every year her belief that God did indeed hear and answer prayer had grown stronger. One day when she was reading to a child Bunyan's story of the fire which One secretly fed with oil from behind the wall, it occurred to her to observe how this certainty had come upon her unawares. She reflected that, although she had seemed to obtain nothing, inextinguishable hope and the love of prayer had been increasingly hers.

My point in all this is, that this hearing element in prayer is necessary to make the individual soul appropriate and assimilate the inexpressible certainties of true religion as parts of its very life, deeper and higher and broader than any certainty that it can

obtain by the instruction of man, or, to put it another way, by any experience, racial or individual, that comes to it as knowledge.

It is but a corollary from this to say that whether the soul truly listens to God and directs its course by what it hears, must be tested by the visible life. Visible fruit the test. All that is visible is fruit; it is harvested in the sight of men hour by hour; the hidden life is in the branch which grows but abides.

Christian theology "is in the melting-pot." You cannot keep your flock in ignorance of this fact until theology is re-cast, even if, as you hope, it is re-cast in exactly the old shape. But you can, by the passion of your life, show them where to obtain the food and drink in the strength of which they can in the meantime cross the broadest desert of doubt.

LETTER VI

I CAN hardly believe that you think what you say—that you dare not teach that man should trust in the religion I have described, "as it is only a sort of primitive foundation for religion, and not Christianity." It may be that the souls of common men, even of the most earnest seekers after God, speaking with Him, listening to His voice, have never been able in any age to conceive a higher religion than the theology of their day formulates; their prophets had spoken; but converse with God will not cause them to fall to a lower. If, then, in this year of grace, you lay in men the foundation of religion, it will be the sure foundation of Christianity.

When in one of those hours of silent sympathy with nature, you receive a vivid impression of some natural scene, can you

conceive of the beauty apart from all that you know of the facts of the universe? The blue dome—does it impress itself on you as solid? Once to human eyes as clear as yours, to minds as intelligent as yours, it seemed solid; but you cannot see it except as illimitable depth. The budding trees—do they seem to you the habitation of nymphs? or does the poetry of their form and colour speak of the long, exquisite development from moss to frond, from frond to leaf? The birds are mating; what tale do their coloured feathers and sweet notes tell you of the history of specific forms of life? The bees are in the flowers; can you hear the hum and see the colour without feeling in the external beauty the other beauty of that deft device for mating the flowers with one another? Do what you will, the spring to you is not the spring as it was to man before he gained some intimate knowledge of the natural processes that obtain in earth and sky. If this is true in a cursory

Vital Christianity imperishable.

glance at the mere pageant of things, how much more in the religious life, when the soul looks steadfastly to God! Could you gaze at the starry night and see it as if hung with little lamps? As well could any seeking soul in Christendom to-day gaze Godward and see less than self-sacrificing love. It is you, not I, who fear the critic's broom. You think that if you admit its authority all will be swept away. But if all the sacred books, all the outward ceremony, of the church could be immediately driven from the country by some violent foreign iconoclast, the experience of the church would still interpret the voice of God to the silent and seeking heart. Because Christianity was, Christianity still would be, in all its inward power; and nothing lower—nothing different if the present form is ideal—could reappear in outward form as long as men talked with God and let God do most of the talking.

But it would not seem to be this sort of sudden violence of the sword you fear,

but rather a change in the people. You say you fear "that those things which are essential to the highest Christian life would be slowly dissolved away in modern thought if it were encouraged by argument." Now, that is just my point—you have reason to fear modern thought if men are not really resting in what you admit to be the foundation of the religious life alike in the child and ignorant person and in the saint. But, on the other hand, can it be possible that God will fail to impress those hearts to whom He has access with whatever truth is essential to their welfare? Do you think that even so injurious an influence as "new theology" can spoil the listening soul of those principles which God Himself holds within her as within a citadel? You believe that our Lord said of the power of Evil within the soul, that it was necessary first to bind the strong man before despoiling him. How much more is this true of the Power of God! The critics must needs be able first to bind

The inward voice gives essential truth.

God before they can take from those souls in which He consciously abides the necessary truths.

Your fears for the future of religious England must arise, either from the belief that the majority of those in communion with the church are not in any vital and inward communion with God, or from a vague and torturing suspicion that some doctrines and practices which you deem essential to your teaching are not essential to God's. If it is the first I am inclined to agree with you ; and I think your policy of teaching them to look for the inward grace only through the outward sign is fatal.

LETTER VII

You tell me that I am quite mistaken, that you have no doubt at all that what you teach is essential in God's sight, or that communion with the church is, for all well-intending persons, communion with God. You cannot, however, count upon God being articulate to any except through the church. Well, of course, that is an opinion which, as you hold it, I am bound to respect. But on what ground do you hold it?

If God speaks only through the church to the individual mind, how is it that in certain countries the church has declined, as you fear it may decline in England? Who is responsible for this decline? Is it God? or the church as a whole? or

Voice of God informing the church comes through personal lives.

the church at some given time and place? or the individuals that compose it? The church, of course, is a corporate whole, as is every branch of the church within itself. Probably none but isolated theorists ever looked upon a church as a mere aggregate of lives. Every human organisation has behind it the vital fact of its corporate mind, of which we are only just beginning to learn the psychology. I cannot be wrong in asserting that if this corporate crowd spirit of any branch of the church is not in harmony with the spirit of Christ, the origin of the failure is to be found in the lives that compose it, that make its character for evil—and if for evil, also for good. Only when each particular life is taught of God can the corporate mind be taught of God. The corporate mind may be more than the aggregate of private minds, but they make it what it is.

I think we all assume that where the church has become retrograde, decadent, corrupt, the reason is to be found in the

men and women who compose it, in their lack of true religion. There are cities in South America where a large Roman Catholic population is at a very low ebb morally and spiritually, but the sacraments of the church have not been neglected. The fault must surely be in the people?

If the individual, inward, spiritual talk with God were not needed to make God articulate in the church, how is it that the church could thus decline in any time and place? Indeed, I think it is a mere matter of history that in most cases of decline the outward and visible church life went on while the corrupting process was proceeding; and when, on the other hand, the outward life of the church was most violently reft from any people, the blessing of the persecuted has been theirs. No, I am afraid you must admit that when the church is corrupted it is because prayer has become egotistical or ceased; and prayer is nothing if it be not each man's dealing with God. It may be more! Public prayer is something more than the aggregate of private

prayers ; but it is certainly never less ; and it is upon the humility or hearkeningness of each soul's prayer that the strength or feebleness of the church depends. How can any band of Broad Churchmen dealing with the oracles, or band of Radicals dealing with politics, prevent you from teaching the need of hearkening prayer, the mead of hearkening prayer, to your parishioners with such passion and fervour that each one of them will be for ever safe and valiant in the secret counsels they will receive from God ? Without this they are not safe, because the temple of their dear old familiar prejudices is to be cast down—not one stone will be left upon another.

LETTER VIII

You say that I am not practical, that you are no theorist, that from your experience of hard parochial work you know that if the majority of Christian teachers shared my easy-going tolerance the non-Christian majority would rob the church and leave her denuded. You say that if all that is ancient and authoritative is subjected to analysis by the clergy entering into modern arguments, the church will be betrayed, and then the frightened people, scattered like sheep without a fold, will grow weak and degenerate for lack of spiritual food and shelter. You are sure, therefore, that it is best to stir up the laity to aid in rebuilding the walls of orthodoxy, which foolish argument has already half demolished. You would teach them to

Church defence.

build, trowel in one hand and sword in the other, that their ramparts may withstand the shock of the destructive force.

You send me a new book which hails from Mirfield, and which incites you to this view. I will read the book, but my immediate answer is that the non-Christian democracy which you fear is largely composed of the laity you teach. In the census you claim more than one-half the population for the church; you fear that many of these if influenced by modern criticism will fall away. You think to gather the faithful few, and strengthen the walls as against any battering-ram. But doubt of authority in the heart of the laity is no battering-ram; it rather resembles deep-seated volcanic action; and if your fears are legitimate it is seismic disturbance that is at hand. You cannot save the situation by reiterating the necessary qualities of those very doctrines which are every day more widely called in question. To do so is bidding your flock remain building the walls in an earthquake. Their only

security is to seek the crypts of inward converse with God. If they are safely there, with their true wealth and all that they need to sustain life, they will soon be out again rebuilding the edifice. Christ the Master-Builder will surely be with them, and you need have no fear that it will be formless or unstable.

The true stronghold.

LETTER IX

You reply to me that no teaching is of any value that is not definite in creed. Where do you begin, then, with your definite teaching? "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth" . . . "and of all things visible and invisible"—is that where you begin?

God the maker of heaven and earth,

Well, no one can definitely say "God made," without having in mind all that he certainly knows of God's making. You think of Him as guiding the whirling electron from the beginning of time until now—all the process of the suns going on in each atom—until almost infinite diversity came into being. Did He indeed thus make heaven and earth and all things? How did He make our universe? By moving

the atoms from without? No; you fully realise that movement, which we may perhaps count the lowest kind of animation, is within each atom. Was there authority? Yes; there was — for example, the pull of gravitation; but not until the atoms had (as we are forced to express it) grouped themselves together. When they moved together into groups, gravitation regulated the circuit of the spheres. And that was how God chose, too, to make the church; the animation is in the atom. Do you think that my own illustration condemns me? that the pull of gravitation, once established, is a fixed authority? It closely resembles the authority possible in human, *i.e.* ecclesiastical, affairs. The whole universe is still moving from within, as it seems to have done before the worlds were formed. You say authority is established in gravitation! Yes, but the authority is in the mass. A plumb-line will not hang straight near a mountain; the mountain pulls the plumb-line. If the mountain is broken up and scattered, the

line hangs straight. The falling rocks press downward on the earth. By the action of water these rocks crumble; they pass into vegetation, into animal life. Dissolution follows, and the resulting gases are differently affected by gravitation; they do not press downward on the earth, but rise. All the time the nature of the final atoms, or, if you will, the electrons that compose the mountain, the plumb-line, the rocks, and the gases, do not change. Where is authority? In the nature of the final unit; and its pull depends on their grouping. It is as the atom combines with others that the laws it obeys cause it to do this or that.

That is the way that God made the heavens and the earth. We are all willing nowadays, in physical science, to give up our theories and take our instructions from facts, saying, thus God works. Let us admit that fact must reveal truth also concerning the church, because if it is divine, it is also a human affair. Man is in human affairs the final unit; God does not move him from without, like a pawn.

and of the church.

Man gives civil and religious rules to mankind before mankind gives them authority. Authority is in the nature of the final unit. The rule only lasts as long as men continue to acknowledge it by remaining in the grouping which evolved it, which it involves.

The authority of Jesus only carried weight in so far as God moved within men to receive and reflect it. Consider how difficult it was for even our Lord to guide from without the understanding of His chosen disciples. In those most extraordinarily naïve books we call the Gospels, is it not written that the apostles were men whose minds He could hardly form to His liking? so that when Peter at last proclaimed his master the Messiah, Jesus exclaims, "(I, standing here in) flesh and blood did not teach you that; it was the Father." And He added, "On this rock (of the man taught immediately by God) will I build my church." Whatever more this passage means, it certainly means this. The authority of Jesus only

The church was without form,

carried weight in so far as God moved within men to receive and reflect it.

Do you think that these same apostles found it easier to instruct their converts—to form their minds? Do they not always appeal to teaching of the spirit within? Do you believe that there is any truth in that report of the first apostolic sermon, where St. Peter begins by claiming the fulfilment of Joel's words, "Your young men and maidens shall prophesy," and his climax is, "Ye (also) shall receive the Holy Ghost"? Was that great gift empty of any intellectual import? Did St. Paul receive his intellectual religious outlook from the other apostles? No, but from God. What does he say to recent converts at Rome—say before he begins the rapid outpouring of his own didactic arguments? "As to you, brethren, I am convinced that even apart from my teaching you are already enriched with complete Christian knowledge and able to instruct one another." Then take the Epistle of love—one of the

and the Spirit of God brooded upon it.

latest of New Testament writings. "His anointing gives you instruction in all things . . . there is no need for any one to teach you." Do you think the early Christians were all ideal men? You know that they were not. God the Father Almighty, who made the church, made it by inwardly guiding foolish laymen.

I am no individualist, as you well know. I believe that the corporate human mind is a great natural reality, that a man cannot even be conceived of except in relation to mankind. But in relation to every human organisation he is the final unit. When, as you would have us, we all constantly stand up and say solemnly, "I believe in God," we say at least, "I believe in that Mind who gave the constitution of the universe, and willed that each man should be a new centre of human activity, with an outlook on the universe peculiar to himself, and therefore with some power peculiar to himself that he may contribute to the whole; that to each man God stands in the relation of an ideal father."

Then, when I ask you to teach that belief, you refuse on the plea that "a creed must be definite."

By a creed you mean half a dozen dogmas that depend on one another. How, then, can you teach the later clauses definitely if you refuse to teach what is definitely implied in the first? I believe you took a good degree in mathematics as a foundation for your short theological course! Then make it, as far as possible, a foundation: can you teach definitely the later processes of arithmetic before the first have been mastered?

Let us be more definite.

It seems to me it is not for you to charge me with indefiniteness of creed, for I would have you somewhat more definite! When you say God made all things visible and invisible, pause there. Remember that of all those things which we believe to be invisible, one—one only—comes within the field of consciousness—the still small voice within the heart of a man!

LETTER X

THEN, as you say the second article of the creed is most vital, let us go on to it. As when clouds disperse in the sky, there is in every generation a great rending and tearing of the veils that have obscured the moral vision of Christendom. Everywhere, now, people are getting together in groups, and trying in different ways to formulate their realisation that to believe in Jesus Christ means to make His ideals our own and to give our lives for their accomplishment. They see that this means to raise the common people to higher physical, as well as higher moral, conditions, to seek with might and main to take away all grounds of enmity between men and nations, to realise truth in the newspaper, justice in

Belief in Jesus Christ involves belief in His ideals.

taxation, and brotherhood in social life. There is a great deal to do. Man, woman, and child, giving all their hopes, all their prayers, doing all their work, whatever it be, in the spirit and power that will tend to this result, will still find that the mountains of ignorance and enmity move slowly before the united effort. But that nothing less than this, for man, woman, or child, constitutes faith in Jesus Christ, is an idea that has broken upon us from behind our clouds, and is shining ever more strongly with the promise of a better day.

How does this compare with the older conception of what constituted the lay Christian's life—negative virtue, scrupulosity in personal religious observances, a tithe of time and income given to the poor, and intellectual assent to the creed? This was the ideal of a past generation. Thousands of simple and noble souls overstepped it; but both poetry and fiction, representing our social and civic life, are significantly lacking in any principal

characters who rise to a higher standard. It was no wonder that even this standard was never generally attained, because there is nothing more difficult for humanity than to stretch itself into the proportions of a false ideal. The old story of the publicans and sinners being nearer the kingdom is surely based on the fact that they were at least, on a certain low level, natural.

A rural parish.

But now, how many in your country congregation have realised that a great change has taken place? The new light has come, has found an entrance into thought and literature and religious teaching, so that the old standard is no longer permissible except to the wilfully ignorant, the determinedly blind. I ask you how many of your congregation are still living satisfied in the old way, giving labels of derision or enmity to anything that comes across their horizon that suggests that their personal righteousness is not worthy the name of Christianity? You have, I think, several retired soldiers—a General This, a Colonel That, and so on—

three of them making the best appearance and getting the most pleasure they can, out of a small income, and one of them with a large income, a stately pleasure-house, a niggardly purse, and a bad temper. And then you have that retired iron-master, who has taken the place of the squire of earlier days—a man of all the negative virtues and somewhat liberal charities, who is always talking of the unreasonableness of the working man, as if he belonged to a different species from himself. And you have a large feminine element, who are very regular at all your services. Many of them visit the poor without the least hope that those they visit will ever be anything else but poor. They teach them to do their duty in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call them, and do not observe that they misquote and slander the Catechism. (I should not have believed that this could happen in this generation had I not heard it last spring!) You have a few trades-people, and a few worthy working-class people, whose ideas

are moulded in unconscious imitation of the gentry. Are you telling these people that they have eyes but they do not see the new light, and ears but they do not hear the winds of a better life that are swelling through the land? When this iron-master's second son came home from the university filled with the new conceptions of what the kingdom of God would mean for young and old, rich and poor, did you frankly side with him, and tell his father he did wrong to quarrel with him? Had he been the heir, able to do more for the parish, would you not have been more sympathetic with his enthusiasms? As it was, he could go into a far country without his portion and the parish be no poorer. When Mrs. Smith's daughter returned from her training at the slum "settlement," her eyes dazzled with the new vision, did you stand by her, and tell all your frightened feminine followers that they must learn what she had to teach? or did you help them to prune her down to their own level? Oh, I know quite well that you yourself

are not unenlightened. You give all the time that you can spare from your multitudinous religious services to raising the poor of your parish; and you use leadless glaze, and read the tracts of the C.S.U. if you do not belong to it. And as to your personal devotion of all you are and possess to what you deem your work, that is beyond all praise!

Without saving faith.

But, after all, what is your work? Is it not to save the lost? Even your enemies, the critics, believe that somewhere, sometime, in His ministry, Jesus made some such statement as that those who believe on Him will be saved and those who do not believe on Him will be lost. It is allowed to be impossible that the books written about Him at the end of the first century could have been what they are if this had not been a feature of His teaching. He must have meant something by "salvation," something by the condition of "being lost." If old imaginations concerning a future hell, which is only reached by the way of gross sin,

are so obliterated in our minds that we cannot hold them vividly, it is still the wildest folly to reckon ourselves Christians and not suppose that still beneath that word "lost" lie terrible realities. And when you come to think of it, how could a so-called Christian be more easily lost than in neglecting the call of Jesus Christ —the light of life, as it comes to his generation ?

Consider, for instance, the case of Colonel ——, who has given the prime of his life to following a profession mainly for the sake of the pay and the rank it brought him, and has now settled down beside you to spend twenty or twenty-five years of fair health in fussing over his own affairs, playing golf, acting in private theatricals played for charity, and going to church under the impression that he is on the way to heaven by the mercy of God and because he is a Churchman ! You got him to take a class in Sunday School. So, in a kindly and quite modest manner, he sits down for an hour every Sunday, and

teaches a class of intelligent lads that they ought to be humble and obedient followers of Jesus Christ, that they ought to work hard and leave the world better than they found it. You persuaded him to do this, although he had a hatred of seeming pious, by explaining to him that he was quite fit for the task because he had no vices. Heaven help us! What could be a worse vice in any man than to teach intelligent lads by precept what he denies by his practice every other hour of the week? His class is much more intent on imitating his practice than on obeying his precepts. Does he work hard? Will he leave the world better than he found it? Are not all his political and social energies directed to keeping it as bad as it is? For fear that he may lose one per cent on his brewery shares, or something of that sort, he would prevent anything in the shape of a change from taking place. Does he not foment every incipient war fever by his jingoism? Is he a humble and obedient follower of Jesus Christ, while golf and

silly entertainments for charity, and making the best appearance, and getting the most pleasure out of nine-tenths of his income, fill up his time? And the cry of squalid children and drunken age goes up to heaven from the hovels in a village within a few miles of his door, and the cry of stunted and corrupted youth from the slums of every town upon the map of his country—the country which he prides himself upon having honourably served!

You are not entirely satisfied with him and others like him, I know; but if he and some of his friends would begin, entirely of their own accord, to come to the daily Eucharist, you think they would fulfil all your hopes; it is toward that you often direct your preaching. But the Colonel comes now twice as often as he used to: do you find he does twice as much to bring about the kingdom of God? Alas! I have the very gravest fears that there are many ways of saying, "Lord! Lord!" and remaining outside the Christian salvation—ways which are

so familiar to us all that we have ceased to notice them. Do you seriously think that if he attended every service you have he would begin to think in terms of the masses, instead of in terms of one poor little privileged class? When that is the sure effect of such devotion your view of the importance of the church services will triumph all over the world; there will be no need to argue for it.

You will say that no man's religion can be judged from outside. At any rate, we are told to judge of a teacher by his fruits. In my opinion, your fruit so far is a parish largely lost!

Think what it means. Your well-to-do parishioners hold, I suppose, that to believe in Jesus Christ and call Him Lord involves at least the faithful endeavour to walk in His footsteps. And where are their own footprints? They wend to clubs, where the highest enthusiasm seems to be evoked by grumbling at the taxes, where idle men wax most energetic when arguing that the "lower" classes "should learn and labour

truly to get their own living." They wend to the golf-course, not for recreation from toil but to find occupation, and there they manufacture wastrels by teaching idleness to boys who ought to be learning a trade. They wend to dinners whose price would educate an orphan. They wend to church, where they call themselves "miserable sinners," and where they cultivate those sentiments which make them most indignant when any other voice than their own suggests that they are not righteous!

Now, let us have no confusion. I am not saying that this sort of life is not a good one for an English gentleman—that is a matter of opinion with which I am not concerned. But to hold that these are the footsteps of Christ is a position intellectually rotten. If they do not know this, their ignorance reflects on the church. In this age such a lax view of belief in Christ certainly cannot be held without decay of the reasoning faculty, and, as Mr. Inge[1] has well said, "our faculties are the

[1] *Christian Mysticism*, p. 19.

appointed organs of communion between God and man."

What is decaying cannot be brought to the altar of Christ! The very altar recedes before it, and is no altar to the would-be giver. The Holy Grail vanishing in the moral darkness must be re-sought.

LETTER XI

YES, there is no question but that dear old fogies who worship an infallible Bible, and thus maintain Old Testament morals, are a difficulty to you. I remember that our good Dr. R—— was once much disturbed because, when he was delivering an able sermon upon the progressive character of revelation in the Old Testament, Mrs. T—— flounced out of church. It was the more annoying for him because as she crossed the middle aisle she made an ostentatious obeisance to the altar.

The old fogy and an infallible Bible.

But don't you think our natural sloth is always eager to create bugbears, and that this very antagonism can be handled so

that its sting is extracted? Mrs. T—— probably suffered more than Dr. R——; but her sufferings could have been assuaged as well as her mischief-making minimised. A few years ago a little book fell into my hands, a book so persuasive by reason of its obvious affection for the critics, every one of them, and for all their opponents, and characterised from end to end by such strong common-sense, that it seemed to me it would lead the very oldest and fogiest person safely into a sympathetic view of Biblical criticism. And it was interesting, too, every line of it. I don't think it is much known, but I will get it for you if I can, and in the meantime here are two extracts from it which I find in a note-book.

Piety a natural critic.

How is it that the Bible of the simplest saints will be well worn and thumbed, perhaps actually torn, at the Psalms and in the Gospels, and the page quite clean in Leviticus and in Esther? It is because they are higher critics. And their criticism is perfectly just. They might not acknowledge in words

that there are degrees of inspiration in the Bible; but the markings in their Bibles make it perfectly plain that in effect they do. It is quite possible, indeed, for one who has nothing of the critical faculty to read over the whole Bible mechanically, a chapter a day perhaps, and get as much good out of the toughest morsels as out of the sweetest, that is, probably, no good at all. Such an one can dispense altogether with criticism of all kinds; but if he is to make real use of his Bible, if he is to discern the things of God which are there, he must read it in the light of such critical faculty as he has.[1]

Reformation and Bible.

There is a very common error in regard to the relation of the Protestant Reformation to the question of authority in matters of religion. The supposition is that the reformers simply exchanged one external authority for another, turning from an infallible Church to an infallible Bible as the supreme arbiter. It is an entire mistake. The early reformers certainly gave up the idea of an infallible Church, but what they put in its place was the perpetual presence of Christ Himself with His people, the witness of the Spirit with the word responded to by the Spirit-guided soul. There are those

[1] *The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture*, by Dr. J. Monro Gibson, p. 183.

who think that Luther was quite peculiar in the freedom with which he dealt with sacred Scripture. Every one knows that he condemned the Epistle of James as "an epistle of straw." But every one does not know that Calvin, who may be supposed to represent the more rigid school of the reformers, though less rash in his language, was as far as Luther himself from accepting the rigid theory of inspiration afterwards introduced. He deals with the whole subject in his *Institutes*, where he makes it clear that what he sets over against the idea of an infallible Church is the reality of an ever-present Spirit in contact with the minds of the truly devout. "Profane men," he says, "desire and insist to have it proved by reason that Moses and the prophets were divinely inspired. But I answer that the testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason. For, as God alone can properly bear witness to His own words, so these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who spoke by the mouth of the prophets, must penetrate our hearts, in order to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message with which they were divinely entrusted. . . ." In the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England there is no theory of inspiration. What is specially

declared there is "The sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for salvation." So, too, the fifth article of the Westminster Confession of Faith, after referring to the value of the testimony of the Church to the Scriptures, and to the evidence of their divine authority to be found in the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, etc. (all appealing to the human power of appreciation), proceeds, "Notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts." Perhaps most distinct of all is the larger Catechism, . . . "but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very word of God." It is also very significant that the Heidelberg Catechism, extending to as many as a hundred and twenty-nine questions, makes no reference whatever to the Scriptures.

From such authoritative documents of the Reformation as these it is abundantly evident that there was no shifting from the external authority of an infallible Church to the equally external authority of an infallible Book, but an appeal first to what the Scriptures manifest themselves to be to the devout soul, and next,

as the supreme authority, to the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man.[1]

[1] *The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture*, by Dr. J. Monro Gibson, p. 109 seq.

LETTER XII

You would be as quick as I to repudiate a belief in verbal inspiration; if it were said in any local print that you taught this, you would call it a slander. But you throw texts at me in reply to what I say, texts that are no answer if their words are not authoritative. This is unimportant because our letters are unimportant; but there is an important side to the habit.

In almost every sermon you draw weighty conclusions, in the sight and hearing of all your people, from the *ipsissima verba* of your text. Where the premise is gone, the conclusion is invalid. Now, this has been going on in almost every country church for a quarter of a century, and the people are waking up to the fallacy. Another

Logic in sermons.

generation of better schooling, and how many will be gone from you! You think it will be time to give them truth in another form when they have learnt to distrust your present form. But by that time they will not be sitting there patiently, Sunday after Sunday, to hear you. Is there no truth in Christianity that you can teach them in a logical way? Logic is, after all, the test of the power that one man has to communicate truth to another. It may go very little way in finding God, or in finding your brother, but undoubtedly you must comply with its laws in instructing your brother verbally.

Logic in life.

The Bible is not lost because there is no fragment in the whole of it whose words we can call the very words of God. God wrote in the lives of nations. The teaching of our Lord is not lost because He did not choose to have it written down for us, so that we could know without doubt what He said. He chose to write in the lives of men; and when the men on whose minds and

hearts He first engraved the impressions of His ideals for the world were nearly all dead, and those that remained looked back over scores of tumultuous years to companionship with Him as a vision of youth, then the records we have were written to give magnificent testimony to the fact that His writing on the lives of men was a success. It worked ; the ideals of Jesus of Nazareth worked ; the companionship with the risen and now invisible Christ worked ; trust in the guidance of the Holy Ghost worked. Although of every separate text we may be bound to say, not only that it might equally well be expressed in other words, but that its contents may or may not represent the accurate detail of fact, still our four Gospels give valid testimony. Some meteor from a higher world had struck humanity with tremendous impact, sending forth potent vibrations ; and human lives attune to these vibrations were transfigured. Life looked a different thing to the early Christians ; and the difference was so attractive, so joyful, that everywhere hearts

laid themselves open to receive the transmitted vibrations of this force which was well called "the *light* of life." There can be no question from these records as to what were in the main the ideals of our Lord for the life of His followers. It is by lives that carry out these ideals, carry them from the heart outward into the re-creation of society, that now and always Christianity will be standing or falling.

If you are going to live this ideal before your people, you must also be logical; you must base your practical moral conclusions upon premisses which are valid for the age in which we live. There is no use in denying verbal infallibility and then teaching your people to base the whole argument of salvation upon words—though words of Scripture. You must surely also be logical in what you build on the premisses. Jesus gave His life to bring the kingdom of God to earth: is it rational to regard the mere expectation of a divine kingdom in another world as the Christian salvation?

LETTER XIII

It is quite permissible to think it sad to live in a world of change. My own feeling is that permanence would be sadder; but, as I say, the other opinion is tenable. We may question whether it is a world of progress or not, but unquestionably it is a world of change. You cannot allow your people to rest only in what is familiar without "loosing" a host of sins upon them.

I once visited a lady who knew that she was dying of a wasting disease. In her youth she had been taught a very complex theory of salvation held by her parents, a sort of cross between Evangelical Presbyterianism and the creed of the Irvingite Church. She had a lively mind and was a great reader, had departed entirely from this faith, in years

The familiar seems the simple.

past had often entertained me with amusing criticisms of it. When I visited her in this illness I ventured one day to say something which it seemed to me would simplify the acceptance of Christianity for her; but she assured me that she was then resting in the Christian salvation, and she added, "I used to want something intellectual, but now I need something very simple." Everything I said she repelled by reiterating, "No; I cannot look upon it in your way now, because I need something very simple." What was my surprise to find she had gone back exactly to the complicated views she had been taught in her youth, and insisted now on every detail of them with pertinacity! It was quite clear that what she meant by "simple" was "familiar." This was a new light to my mind.

I find that almost every one considers the religious theory most familiar to them the simplest. When you tell me that your people need very simple teaching, you are, I think, saying two things. In

the first place, your words are truer, far truer, than you are willing to admit; for we all need to be much more simple than we are, and reduce our religious theories to a God-like simplicity. Secondly, what you consciously mean, I think, is that your people hate anything that is unfamiliar, and that you, being rather fagged with much hard practical work and an enormous number of services and some fasting and not enough sleep, feel quite unfit to do the little real thinking that would be necessary if you left, by a hair's breadth, the ground that has been made familiar to you by endless repetition. In my estimation it would be a thousand times better for you, if it were necessary, to take one day's entire and absolute holiday every week, in order that you might spend at least one hour every other day reading with relish and intelligence something that will help your people and you to stand abreast with God in the waves of change. There is nothing more certain than that God never meant

Less work and more reading.

us to rest in the familiar ; otherwise time would not come to us as an endless progression, and the tides of our life would be other than they are.

LETTER XIV

No, no! A thousand times, no! The laity cannot be left where they are until, as you phrase it, "the old standards and beliefs are again justified by further historical research." Has it ever happened in the history of the world that the best minds of an age have gone back to some former standard or belief? You must preach a new doctrinal argument, a better social and civil order, a deeper spiritual life, if you are to hold the people.

We may not rest in what is familiar.

But I grant you that what is eternal does not change. In whatever way man can participate in the Eternal, he does not change; and agreeing, as we do, that love—fatherly love—which shows itself especially toward those in need, is of the

essence of the Eternal, we see that, in this attribute of Himself, the Eternal is always communicating Himself to the true Christian through the medium of Jesus Christ. We may hold one conception of the mediumship of Christ or another, but all I want to say here is that the faith, as I have stated it, stands the most drastic conclusions of critical research, historic or literary. This faith is not assailed by any reverent inquiry; and irreverence can do us no damage. The ideals of the Gospel have come to stay. There is no body of scholarship now that suggests that Jesus of Nazareth is a myth. Even those who once did so have not questioned that His very shadow had created a new civilisation, and that the force of the human race was flowing along the line of this tendency. You have nothing to fear if you entrench yourself in this truth as in a foundation.

There is a body of knowledge, a realisation of truth, growing certainly with the progress of each civilisation, and, as most of us firmly believe, growing on through

successive civilisations with the history of the race. It is not that old beliefs and old standards are disproved; they are transformed into something else. I, for one, believe that, although whole peoples may decline, religions are always being transformed into something better. But whether that be so or not, there is one thing we can positively affirm—that, as surely as the sun will rise to-morrow, the moral standards and the theological beliefs of the people in your parish will change. They may change for the better by a slow and healthy growth, in which all shall flourish; or they may change in revolution and agony of spirit, in which one shall be saved and another lost; or the people may degenerate and earnest religion almost fade away; it largely depends upon you which it shall be. If you persist in the reiteration of what is familiar, or vary it only by the effort to revive what was familiar to past generations, then the change will be catastrophic to many a soul, and among those who huddle together for a moment in the

catastrophe, one will be taken and another left. There is a sense in which the eschatological language of our Lord is always true; His coming in each age shall always be as a deluge to those who do not watch for change.

The marriage feast of Future and Past.

You are placed in a position of difficulty, I allow. Who that is worth God's husbandry is not? You will certainly need to use to the full all the grace peculiar to your orders, if such grace there be. Here is a magnificent opportunity for you to prove all the power of God's grace. To you is written that vivid story of the everlasting opportunity, the marriage feast of Future and Past. Into the door which every change opens the bridegroom enters with those who have the oil of the eternal Present in their lamps. It is this oil that I am entreating you to provide for the souls in your cure.

I once heard J. H. Moulton say that in the study of comparative religion he had come to the conclusion that a nation's religious progress depended less upon the

conclusions of truth at which they arrived than upon the way in which they arrived at them. Apply this to the Jews, who were slow in arriving at the conviction of the immortality of man; the Greeks triumphantly accepted this belief in earlier ages, but associated with it a conception of a gulf between mind and matter, between the temporal and the eternal. The Jews were then learning to enjoy God here and now, and in the immense satisfaction that they learned to experience in His presence on earth, in the knowledge of His heart and character which they gained from delighting in Him here and now, they came gradually to say to themselves, "If God is so good to us here, if He loves us so much, He cannot bring our existence to an end; He must want to keep us for ever." This way of arriving at the belief in immortality produced something better for the world than the Greeks ever produced. Carry this idea to the Psalms, and you will find there the foundations of our Christian heaven.

They chronicle the period in which the Jews were learning to rejoice in God, not only mid earthly blessings but apart from them, and before they had begun to realise that death would not separate them from Him. What tremendous and very human delight they took in the sense of God's presence! "In thy presence is satiety of joy" (Ps. xvi. 11). "I will sacrifice in his tent sacrifices of shouting; I will sing and make melody unto Jahweh" (Ps. xxvii. 6). See the whole of Psalm xliii., especially v. 4: "God, the gladness of my joy!" "With thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light" (Ps. xxvi. 9). "O taste and see that Jahweh is good: happy is the man that taketh refuge in him" (Ps. xxxiv. 9). "In him our heart is glad" (Ps. xxxiii. 21). "Thou didst loose my sackcloth and gird me with gladness, to the end that my glory might make melody unto thee" (Ps. xxx. 11, 12). "I love thee fervently, O Jahweh, my strength" (Ps. xviii. 1). "My soul looketh for

We may rest in a present God.

the Lord more than watchmen look for the morning" (Ps. cxxx. 6). Our fathers missed the liberal exhilaration of all these words because the traditional explanation was that the psalmists were talking about some future and heavenly state. They were not. They were able to sit down here and now, in prosperity or adversity, and take delight in the practice of the presence of God.

Shut up your terrier; withdraw your presence from him; you know the gloom that will fall upon him. You know how he will listen to each sound of your passing step, what his agony will be when he hears you go out across the fields without him. That is a picture that suggests what the Jew thought he would suffer after death, where God was not. Then, as to the sunshine of his inward life, the sense of upholding in God's presence, I think you may get a suggestion as to that from this same source. Do you remember, last summer, how, when I was walking with you, we loitered just inside the gate of a

As a dog rejoices in his master.

ten-acre field because the dog wanted exercise and would not remain without you? We saw him, a white speck, darting in and out of the farthest hedge, dashing hither and thither, now nothing but the quivering tail seen in the depth of hedge or ditch, now racing frantically round large areas of the pasture on the trail of the happy rabbits he never caught—mad with delight, in harmony with sun and wind, and all the growth and animation of the field, its flowering ditches and deep hedgerows. You explained that, whenever you could, you stood within the gate—perhaps making up your accounts, or reading—in order that the dog might have his game with nature. When we could no longer loiter we came out of the field. You did not call; the dog was at the farthest corner, his head almost buried in the hedge; and yet he could no longer enjoy himself. You had not withdrawn your presence more than a minute before he observed that you had gone, and was beside us, a sober wayfarer. You pointed out to me that to this and

other fields he had access always if he had chosen, but that he never took the least pleasure in them unless you were within the gate. Sometimes, when he could not be with you, he trotted out alone, and on such occasions he never frisked or showed any signs of the delight which all things gave him when in your company. You remarked, too, how touching it was that, when his foot was crushed and he refused to eat and seemed only to desire to die, he still seemed to experience contentment in your presence. These things are surely written in nature for our instruction.

You will, perhaps, say that my illustration is profane, that there can be little in common between a dog's delight in his master and the human soul's delight in God. Well, but what I am telling you is that if you so train people that they can delight in God even as much as that, if His presence somewhere in the field of their consciousness, even when they are fully occupied with hedgerows and rabbits, even when they are wounded and despairing

of life, gives them the satisfaction that your dog takes in you, then nothing—certainly nothing that Modernist or Protestant critic or infidel may prove, or think that he proves, concerning their religious authorities, can dismay them.

LETTER XV

You evidently have the feeling that there is something immoral about free access to God. You say that you must build up a sterner morality before you can teach the delight I speak of. You continue to pitch texts at me, so I will take you on the very words of the text you cite, be they the very words of our Lord or not.

"What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Whatever more these words may imply, they state the truth that what preachers and teachers call sins or virtues many men believe to be sins or virtues. You, and such as you, form the consciences of many a man from childhood up; and

Responsibility of binding and loosing.

will not a man be judged of God by the standard of the conscience you have formed in him?

And so it was in the first age of the church. We all realise how terrible the responsibility was then. The settlement of the question whether the Gentile converts should be required to conform to Pharisaic practices shows exactly the working of this law. If St. Paul had agreed with the Judaising party, which seems to have had the other apostles more or less on its side, the conscience of the Gentile converts would certainly have had to conform to Jewish rites. Had they, in accepting Christ, insisted on violating these conditions, would not that have been sin for them? Had they accepted them, adding an ever-increasing force to the narrowing process, they would have excluded most of the world and made the church a Jewish sect.

How terrible, then, is your responsibility, whether taken upon your own claim to be in some particular sense a successor of the apostles, or on the obvious fact that you

are one of their successors in choosing to stand up and teach Christianity at all!

In what pitiful ignorance do the leisured classes listen to the commandments in parishes where no effort has been made to enforce their wide-reaching obligation! Many of these people choose out of all the religion of the nation just what suits them—the exclusive type of church doctrine that fits their class prejudice, the ritualism which they think is a fashionable form of religion, rejecting the core and spirit of High Churchmanship which involves the close and real fellowship of class with class, of poor with rich. They are quite unconscious of the motives of their choice. They are born and bred in a thorough assumption of their right to be more comfortable and more lazy than the poor, and to govern the poor to that end. They are convinced that this is best for the poor as well as themselves—slave owners have always been convinced that slavery was good for the slave. They are, most of

Sins of the respectable overlooked.

them, entirely unconscious of the vulgarity of mind and external bad manners which all this involves. What they call vulgarity, what they call bad manners, are merely the thoughts they don't think and the things they don't do. They have no conception how badly they behave in the eyes of any good soul accustomed to the real refinements born of equal friendships among all classes of the community. If an ill-trained person comes into one's house he does many disagreeable things; but, while the fact that he cannot distinguish between what is agreeable and disagreeable acquits him of intentional rudeness, it fixes his status far more indelibly than if he meant to offend. Thus it is with the unconscious assumption and patronage of the "better" classes. In any vital condition of the church of Christ, their behaviour, their patronising charities, would fix their status therein as a very low one.

How is it in such parishes as yours? Would not any enquirer coming in from the outside suppose these people to be as

important in the body of Christ as they take themselves to be in the body politic? And these are they who fancy the commandments can be kept without giving their surplus wealth to the needy! Not so did the church in the days of St. Paul interpret Christ! They repeat the commandments; they tunefully implore God's grace to keep them. Do they think it sufficient to keep their minds free from what they call hatred of their neighbours while they are drawing industrial dividends earned in unhealthy conditions and taking up every new war fever with enthusiasm? Do they fancy that our Lord will accept the respectability of their households and their environment while they are buying garments at a price that sends the sempstress on the streets at night to eke out a living, or while they are taking rents or mortgage interest involving such meagre housing for the poor that their immorality is a natural result? Do they imagine that they do not steal while yet they use all the influence of their

privileges, to oppose any legislation that will diminish those privileges, thus depriving millions of their brothers of leisure and pleasure, health and power? And, above all, do they imagine it possible to acquit themselves of bearing false witness against their neighbours while they join in every political cry designed to belittle the character of their party opponents? What possible concord can there be between Jesus of Nazareth and such a phase of church life?

Many a time do I read in that Book of the Beautiful Spirit written by the Bishop of Birmingham on the "new theology"; and although I cannot accept some of its doctrinal positions, when I come to the chapter on the church and the poor, I am inclined to say that a church living those ideas would prove its own doctrine and be all-persuasive, all-conclusive, to those who are waiting for the redemption of England.

Half the men in your congregation are as really intent upon keeping down the income tax as upon bettering the condition

of the poor. They are—to use the words of a report submitted to Convocation in 1907—"more jealous for the maintenance of laws that exist for the protection of property than for those which exist for the protection of the workers." All their politics, all their social practice, the medium through which they read the news of the whole world, are selected according to "the will to power." You assert roundly that Nietzsche, with his gospel of individual push, is an enemy to Christianity with which we must not palter; but you know that the welfare of whole masses of people is of less importance to many of your hearers than any infringement of rights first obtained by might. If you preach to them year after year, and do not bring vividly before them the need of the world for a higher ideal of justice, you allow them to think their attitude of mind is not sin but virtue.

On the other hand, for example, I have myself heard you tell the children that it is wrong for them to attend the schismatic chapel. You modified this to me when I

challenged you on the subject, saying that all you meant was that you couldn't be responsible for their salvation if they did it; but you certainly laid it as a sin on their consciences if they should worship God in a neighbourly way with half their neighbours. Your whole life, too, implies it. Have you called upon the Dissenting ministers? Have you invited them to dine with you, or even take a cup of tea? Your example shows the unreflecting about you that they will do well to despise schismatics. In your out-lying hamlet there is a chapel where the good folk were in the habit of turning in on wet Sundays; now, taught by you, if they cannot get as far as the church they stay at home! You allow the right of might to be esteemed a virtue; but the will to pray to God with half one's neighbours you allow to be a sin. What a pretty binding and loosing is this! Will such morality afford better access to God?

The chapel condemned.

LETTER XVI

I AM glad that—as, indeed, I expected—you agree with me on the class question. Your idea that St. Paul would have forbidden any man who did not do a man's work every day to take the Holy Communion is a most interesting one. One might have thought that much leisure would so stimulate reflection and taste that a nation, or a church, might do well to keep drones; association with the leisured class dispels this illusion. Geniuses—I always believe that God is on the side of genius—are terrible toilers; and even then many of them are crushed down for lack of that gold which the nation could so abundantly supply if we had no drones!

But, as to the last part of your letter, I think your whole attitude toward schis-

matics is wrong, because it is based on a false traditional assumption. I have lately been occupied with the attitude that the best men of the last generation took to theatres; and although you will at once say that the two matters cannot be compared, I beg that you will listen patiently to my illustration.

Puritan and theatre.

I have long had the honour of friendship with a public man in one of our colonies who still refuses large sums of money rather than allow theatrical advertisements in any of the valuable publications he owns. He is willing to admit much in favour of the theatre now that he would not have admitted in his youth. He explains to me that he believes now that many actors and actresses are good people; he does not know any of them personally, but he is assured that they have the highest motives; he has even come to see that the theatre is a great teacher of the people when the plays are—as many now are—highly moral. But, he urges, it is impossible for a newspaper to discriminate accurately what plays

are in this valuable minority; and there are such very great evils connected with the stage! Then he goes on to enumerate these, ending up with a glance at one or two of the most recent instances of publicly acknowledged scandal.

You, however, will agree with me that his argument is not to the point. Any institution based upon faculties and needs which are certainly natural to the human race, and which has been and is one of the greatest teachers of the people, ought not to be ignored because of its faults. We have ceased to estimate virtue by a negative standard. The Christian commandments begin with "Thou shalt." The only right way to deal with a great popular institution is to encourage and strengthen the good in it that it may overcome the evil in it. It is impossible to value a crop rightly by estimating merely the "disutility" (as the economists would say) of the weeds it contains. It is true the weeds need to be rooted out; it is also true that the way to keep them out is to foster and increase

the corn. The value of the crop is the net amount of good seed. But my Puritan never gets beyond reckoning the weeds. I have been telling him that the theatre and the profession of play-wrights are full of evils because they are full of human beings, that so is even the church, and the whole clerical profession—full of evils! The question for him to raise is not whether actors and playgoers have more faults than clergy and religious laity, but how to deal with a great human institution which ought to exist and ought to be good. I remind him that the church is another great institution that has come into the world to stay, and he agrees that we are taking a terrible responsibility upon ourselves if we do not do all that we can to strengthen what is already good in it and to make it better. However bad the church might be in any community, it could never be possible to make that community better by ignoring the church, emphasising and abusing the sins and vices within it, and passing by all persons belong-

ing to it with a charitable shrug and the resigned admission that no doubt many of them are in their way worthy. Nothing short of the conviction that an institution is essentially evil and to be altogether suppressed can justify a man in dwelling only upon its evils and failing to strengthen its good by every means in his power.

Now, I always find that my puritanical friend, when I argue with him, turns aside from the issue at this point to cite some particular instance of the harm that the theatre works, which he can always illustrate from the lives of people who used to act or frequent the play, and desisted in favour of a better way of life. Where, he asks, could better evidence be obtained? Yet he will admit, what I have always remarked, that a pervert from Christianity is not fitted to give a fair view of it, perverts in general being obviously persons unsuited by nature to assimilate and thrive in the particular set of ideas and practices in which circumstances had placed them. I and my friend get no further. I have discovered that in

course of time he has so saturated his mind with the harmful aspect of the theatre, which cannot be denied, that he sees its evils out of all proportion to its good, just as a man may shut out the view of a mountain by holding a fragment before his eye. So I have come to believe that, though in words he is willing to admit that the theatre, if purified, would be one of the chief elements in human progress, this is not a part of his practical belief, because he goes on acting as if the theatre ought to be suppressed.

Churchman and Dissent.

I am sure that by this time you will have perceived that my friend's attitude in refusing to countenance the theatre is in some degree like your attitude toward Dissent. He has not, in the course of a long life, spent as much as a week in trying to find out the good which the theatre is always doing to weary brains, and the aid it is always giving to religion in glorifying the accepted code of ethics, as also by stimulating criticism of outworn maxims and traditions. He has not spent

so much as a day in collecting evidence of the vast improvement in the moral and intellectual standards, not so much of the leading artists, some of whom have always been irreproachable, as of the rank and file of the better companies. Being a conscientious man, while yet by his negation he deals each day the greatest blow he can to the theatre in his vicinity, I am bound to believe that his praise of its possibilities is lip-service only, and that his practical mind and heart remain on the side of suppression, on the plea of its essential harmfulness. For many years he has allowed any ill he heard of any one in the theatrical profession to accumulate in his mind, and this cumulative mass of evidence is set over against a blank, for he has no conception of the good it does, and further, has evidently never attempted to compare the evils that happen in the theatrical world with the evil in other professions or in private life. Any such comparison would suggest that the very kind of sin most often charged

Actors *versus* the pious.

against the stage is not much less frequent in other walks of life, where, however, there is not the same glare of publicity ; while it is acknowledged that from certain other sins common among religious people the theatrical profession are almost entirely free. I have drawn up for him a table of the sins and virtues commonly charged to the two classes respectively. Here it is :—

Sins commonly charged against actors.	Sins commonly charged against clergy.
Neglect of spiritual things.	Narrowness of outlook.
Vanity.	Spiritual pride.
Thriftlessness.	Love of preferment.
Frivolity.	Cant.
Looseness of life.	Love of ease.
	Patronage of the poor.
	Respect of persons.
Virtues commonly attributed to actors.	**Virtues commonly attributed to clergy.**
Humility in spiritual things.	Piety.
Liberality of purse.	Charity of purse.
Charity of heart.	Sense of mission.
Geniality.	Prudence.

I ask you, which set of characteristics would have seemed the more hopeful to our Lord?

But to return to my Puritan friend. I can only explain his conduct by assuming he is still under the spell of the Puritan tradition that the histrionic art is an evil, root and branch. He is, in fact, the victim of an hereditary prejudice; and the result of his action, in the town in which he lives, is the formation and development in a large class of people of a conscientious neglect of the theatre; in consequence, it is only lower class theatres that have paid in that town; the art was debased.

I am going to put aside for a moment your fundamental objection to Dissent—the wickedness of schism—and ask you, for the sake of argument, to consider the large Dissenting bodies merely as institutions which certainly exist, which certainly are teachers of the people, and very popular. Their function is to express Christianity in terms not

The function of Dissent.

sacerdotal, and to bring home Christian emotions and Christian ethics to men who by education or temperament are not so readily affected by the outward in doctrine or ritual. As it is obviously quite impossible to suppress these bodies, can you, as a citizen and public teacher, feel that you are entirely without responsibility for their tone and tendency? If there were a theatre in your parish you would do your very best to help it to be a good theatre. You would try, perhaps at Christmas and Easter, to have appropriate plays—say, *Everyman* or *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*. And in order to keep out injurious plays you would take pains to make friends with the manager, if he were a possible person, and would do your best in general to make good plays pay better than bad ones. Unquestionably, you would feel it impossible to ignore this merely secular institution, passing it by with such canting phrase as "According to their lights these people are honest and well-meaning," and then paying no further

attention to it in the course of years, unless to deplore its low tone and its factious opposition to the church. For, mark you, if that were the way you acted toward the theatre the church would only be caricatured on the stage, and if church-goers did not patronise its better plays it would be bound to present only what was cheap and tawdry. As a matter of fact, while ostracism of the theatre prevailed among respectable citizens the theatre was, for the most part, thoroughly bad.

A lost opportunity.

How very different would be the whole attitude of Dissent in this country toward the church if, in the last two hundred years, Churchmen had uniformly said, "Although we do not consider the difference between us and the sects unimportant; although we are convinced that we are on the right side of that difference and they on the wrong; we cannot disguise from ourselves the fact that they minister to large masses of our countrymen, and we must therefore, while insisting on the significance of the

difference, do all in our power to encourage the best qualities in these powerful teachers, to make friends with the men if we cannot make friends with all their principles, so that no lack of brotherliness on our part shall be the cause of bitterness on theirs!" Perhaps it is possible to imagine what the effect of two hundred years of this sort of treatment might have been from the certainty as to what has been the effect of the very opposite behaviour. The sects have thriven, but so also have their animosities. And if they do not depend for their moral tone on your co-operation, as the theatre might be supposed to do, if, indeed, their moral tone is not inferior to that in the church, it must be because they have the true life in themselves, and certainly your neglect of any attempt to improve them lays what moral defects they have partly at your door.

Complementary vices.

Shall I draw up a list of the charges commonly brought against church and chapel?

Church.	Chapel.
Exclusive tastes.	Ill-breeding.
Class pride.	Vagueness of theology.
Hostility to reforms.	Fanaticism.
Slavery to tradition.	Laxity in commercial honour.
Thankfulness that they are not as Dissenters are.	Hostility to church.

And perhaps the characteristic virtues of each may be set down as, in the church, observance and preservation of social order, based on the sense of the majesty and authority of law; and in the chapel, brotherhood, based on the sense of the equality of all men.

Of course my categories are very rough, only an attempt to express the sentiments of the man in the street; but again I ask you, which list savours most of the Pharisee? and which reminds one most of the taunts cast by the Pharisee at Jesus?

Now let us go back to the real reason of your behaviour toward the sects, or, to be more particular, toward the chapel in your parish. Your mind is dominated by the

Recent research must modify antipathies.

idea that their very existence is a wrong to the community, and that on the ground that the unity of the Christian church ought to be a visible unity, and that holy orders are essentially sacerdotal. Now, I think that your father and grandfather might quite honestly have held this view about schismatic bodies without being involved in either moral or mental obliquity; but it is quite impossible for you to hold it without failing to reach the accepted standards of truth and justice. The facts of early Christian history, and the manner of composition of the New Testament as affecting its contents, which recent research have elucidated, give ample room for the opinion that the government of the church should be a hierarchy, and that Christianity is a sacerdotal religion, but they afford that opinion no decisive authority. Providence has not offered to decide this contention between the Churchman and the Nonconformist. The opinion that the government of the church ought to be democratic, and that Christianity is not

sacerdotal, is equally tenable by men whose whole lives are devoted to seeking truth and endeavouring to behave righteously. But societies adhering to such different opinions and practices cannot at present live in outward unity; therefore neither should be blamed for failing to conform to the other.

You are bound to reverse your whole behaviour to the Dissenter. If you are bound to treat a neighbouring theatre with encouraging sympathy and help, how much more are you bound to do for a Christian congregation which embodies a legitimate view of Christianity? I have been told again and again that to-day the English parson is very liberal in his attitude toward Dissent. Alas! what must he have been yesterday!

LETTER XVII

You say you cannot for one moment allow my contention that God has not clearly indicated His will as to the nature of His church; that, whatever the historical critics may say, the existence through all the Christian ages of one and only one Holy Catholic Church, continuous in her doctrine and sacraments, is the all-sufficient proof of what God's will in the matter is.

Well, there is a great deal to be said for that opinion of yours; but what I want you to see is that history can be read differently. Have you not noticed how often in controversy arguments for any position are based on unproven assumptions with regard to the opposite position?

Take one instance. I have seen no recent book vindicating Catholicism—whether

from modernists or orthodox — which does not base much of its contention on the puerility of what they call "unhistoric religion." Now, as a matter of fact, there is no religion that is not historic. No religion that has proved itself to have vitality, that has held a large number of people in its grasp for as much as a century, but is a wave in the tide of racial religion. Let us consider the epithet "historic" in this connection. A somewhat learned Anglican parson came into my house the other day, and, in making some reference to Quakerism, swept it aside with a flick of his hand, as it were, because it was "not historic." But on what do the minds of the Quakers feed? Have they developed a little religious literature all for themselves since the days of Fox, on which they live exclusively, regarding all else as heresy? I do not know much about them, but the supposition, when put into words, is absurd. All through the universal religious history of mankind, or at least, through the fragment of it which

All religion historic.

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we possess, the mystical aspect, which the Quakers chiefly emphasise, is to be seen running like a silver thread in some great coloured tapestry—here, there, everywhere —glinting, reflecting a white ray that is only not quite pure because it has a hint of shadow in it. All through the history of Christianity this silver thread runs; certainly I never met an educated Quaker who did not take his stand with the mystics of all ages.

What do your friends mean by "historic"? There is a sense in which a colony has no history; there is another sense in which the colonial is far more intensely historic than the man in the mother-country, because he has been obliged, in the isolation of the wilderness, to consciously rouse himself to an intelligent apprehension of his past. It is not hackneyed to him by the sights and sounds of every turnpike. If you want to realise to the full the flavour of the national sense in imagination, in reason, join some small club of Canadians in some backwoods

Historic continuity of colonies

or ranching settlement, and you will find, not so much in recent emigrants, but in Canadians of two or three generations standing, an attachment to what is English that you will never find in England. I have heard, in such quarters, the words, "Magna Charta," "Cressy," "Westminster Abbey," "Waterloo," spoken with a reverence and emotion that they do not, as a matter of fact, evoke in England. Or take the whole political and social life of a colony: is it an artificial and recent creation? The question has only to be asked; we need not dwell on the answer. A British colony is British; a German colony is German; a French colony is French. This law is not even abrogated by political disunion. To-day the province of Quebec is more closely united to pre-revolutionary France than is much of France, although all visible continuity is cut off. And there is nothing so obvious in the Constitution of the United States of America as that its framers did not hazard what was new. A new nation is

not new, except in the most superficial sense of the word.

Nor is a new sect new. A religion grips the conscious and the unconscious mind of many. Unconsciously all the ideals, all the aspirations, the passions and follies, that have welded themselves into the race, are in it because men are in it. Its mechanism must respond to the needs of the men who compose it. A leader can only lead men by evoking what is in them; he cannot create something new and put it into them. Consciously, a religion is made up of explicit knowledge and the reaction of the conscious reason and emotion of men upon it. Knowledge can be added to, but how very small must the new part always be in proportion to the old! We see this in all practical affairs. No man, woman, or child can receive an entirely new opinion about anything vital. No more in religious thought than in other thought does nature ever make a leap. Greek philosophy was consciously carried over into Christian theology,

and sects.

but it had a far deeper influence upon the Christian church than can be accounted for by the conscious knowledge of it which Christian thinkers possessed. The same must be said of Semitic influence. And there is no ancient civilisation that did not, by its religious systems, contribute to these contributors to Christianity. Just in the same way is Protestantism the outgrowth of Catholic centuries. Luther could not have been what he was without Augustine or Aquinas. His mind and heart were the product of tendencies which had been ripening through what we call "the dark ages," and it was with this mind and heart that he interpreted St. Paul. To-day, when the Lutheran family gathers for its Christmas festivities, or within some bare church for its solemn celebration of the "Abendmahl," in what sense can you say that they have cut themselves off historically from the Catholic Church? Only in a very superficial sense. You may say that what I call a superficial sense carries with it to you all that is important—the un-

broken flow of apostolic grace. True, the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, the Independents do not value your doctrine of apostolic succession; but to say that is one thing, and to say, in a large and magnificent way, as many of your party so constantly do, that they have no historical connection with the church of all ages, is a very different thing. The very wording of their hymns and prayers, their sermons and their books of devotion, give the lie to it.

Another assertion is that, however tradition may have dogged their steps, they have broken with the historic church in intention. But all that is true is that they intended to break with what they called the false accretions of the historic church. For don't forget that every "schismatic" believes that Christian orthodoxy includes the theological dogmas he holds in common with the Catholic Church.

I have the utmost respect for those who believe it to be possible, and therefore necessary, to draw all men into one organisation, whether they believe the present

Catholic form of worship and church government to be a true development, or whether they believe it to be a false development. Sometime their hope may be realised; in the meantime they will not gain their end by perverting facts. In every case of so-called "schism," small or great, the reformer has seen the church as a great half-stagnant marsh, into which the river of the early church flowed, ever giving all the purity, all the vitality, to be found in the marsh. He proceeds to make an outlet toward the future on the side opposite to where the past flows in, and believes that the pure stream flows through his cutting. He may be wrong; he may be right; my point is that it is not his intention to break off from the historic church; he has never called himself a "schismatic."

No intentional schismatics.

So far I have been talking of two things —the real historic standing of the sects, and the intention of every reformer to carry on the historic tradition. I am not arguing that these churches are better, or as good

as the Catholic Church, but merely that this objection—that they are not historic, is valid only on certain more or less arbitrary assumptions.

To touch on another point: we hear a great deal nowadays about the sense of historicity in the ceremonies of the Catholic Church; but any consciousness of this among any large proportion of Catholic worshippers is quite a recent development. We get it only in writers as new as Father Tyrrell, who says:—

> What is so often used as a reproach against Catholicism—its various affinities with non-Christian religions, with Judaism, and Graeco-Roman, and Egyptian paganism, and all their tributaries—seems to us one of its principal glories and commendations. We like to feel the sap of this great tree of life in our veins welling up from the hidden roots of humanity. To feel so, to possess this sense of solidarity with all the religions of the world—this is to be a Catholic.[1]

Half a century ago it was much more common for Catholic thinkers to dilate upon their present visible relationship to the

[1] *Through Scylla and Charybdis*, p. 23.

great majority of living Christians, and the mass of their followers thought of nothing else. The great Protestant bodies have during the last fifty years awakened simultaneously to the sense of the continuity of all history; their inner unity with the Christendom around them has always been, not only taken for granted, but distinctly taught by them. You may arbitrarily say they are not united with Christendom past or present, but the sense of union, with all its educative force, is not lacking to them.

Historic sense a modern growth.

I am sure there is a real confusion of thought in Catholic writers between what is truly historic and also spiritual in unity and continuity, and what is ceremonially historic. They assume that large fragments of present Christendom, which disregard the latter, have lost the former; and if you read only the works of these men you must be involved in the unconscious cant of this confusion.

LETTER XVIII

You are really quite a brick to me-ward. You do not keep silence in disdain and anger, and you send me a photograph of that manly infant of yours—one vivid point of beauty on which we can both agree. You say, with great justice, that it is not your part to be a thinker, that you are bound to choose your leaders and trust them, and largely to accept their report of the signs of our own times and of all past times. How is it possible, you urge, to work a parish nearly single-handed, and at the same time to read enough new literature to be able to estimate it in the right proportion? How is it possible to struggle, as the old hymn says, with foes —very practical foes—without and within, and at the same time revise that very

religion which is your only defence against them?

. . . . .

In one aspect we are all of us very pathetic. The pathos of your life often comes across me with the force almost of tragedy. The pathos of your religious party is more and more evident to me. But pathos is a quality common to all human life, and there is no man and no party that is not, in one aspect, very pathetic—toiling in rowing in the storm of the elements, unable to do and be all that ought to be done and realised, because of the stress of the brief hour of life. The important point is, when does pathos pass into the real tragedy of failure? Is it not when the stress of life, either in greed or sacrifice, prevents men from storing the energy of their lives in those things which are eternal? How familiar St. Paul was with this latter form of tragedy in well-intentioned lives is suggested by that list of splendid moral achievements which he brushes aside as

Pathos of noble lives.

Pathos passing into tragedy.

impotent without what he calls Love—"utterance inspired, full illumination, utter faith," adding—

And though I dole away in charity all my goods,
And though I yield up my body to a death of fire,
And have not love
Nothing it availeth me.[1]

Now it goes without saying that if I did not think you quite splendid, quite magnificent in fact, in what you are and what you do, I would not take the trouble to write you these teasing letters; and the irritating point that I shall now introduce to your notice is that in your admission that you choose your own leaders of thought and have time to listen to their voices is involved your confession that you have, if you choose to use it, the volition and the time for all that I am asking you to do—which is merely that you should not choose your theological authors all from one party.

Let us go back to this rhapsody of St. Paul's, and place it upon the foundation of

[1] Way's translation.

our Lord's answer to the scribe who was not far from the kingdom, and put beside it that word in the Epistle of love, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen." Loving God with all the mind, having the love to one's neighbour which would make all that hinders it seem as a tinkling cymbal, is impossible to us until we have realised that we must obey Love's law by transcending party sentiment. It goes without saying that we must often act in parties; we must, to a certain extent, think in parties. Our souls seem to be made in batches—types of temperament and casts of mind which reach out to one another over all sorts of different environments, which perhaps have out receivers tuned to the same rate of vibration in waves of thought (if there be any force in such a simile). And there can be no question that through all history men, and bodies of men, have fallen into the worst sins and mistakes through the habit of giving sym-

Love alone insures success.

pathetic attention only to what they are inclined to agree with, *i.e.* to the voices of only their own party.

I am not asking you to give up a single belief that you hold—that is not my aim —I am asking you to root your mind, as well as your heart and soul and strength, not in party doctrines, but in the love of God. And I think you can never do this while choosing the teachers of your mind from only one ecclesiastical party, one cast of belief; because, doing this, you can never have real friendship for the brother whom you have seen unless he happens to be of your party; you have no touching points with him. Take what you said earlier, that the laity are indifferent to historical research or critical questions of any kind; well, if that is your experience, I suppose it is not unique, and that the country laity, who are to-day regular church-goers, are indifferent to the new learning or to the rational side of religion. What about those who have gradually abandoned church-going just because they are not indifferent to either,

and have received from the local church no account of its relation to authority, biblical and ecclesiastical, which is satisfactory to them? You can only say the laity in your parish are indifferent by limiting the term "laity" to those content to adhere stolidly to traditional views. If things continue as they are, the sifting process will go on until the church-going laity are all of one temperament or are ignorant. In either case they will be increasingly out of touch with their fellow-Christians, for it is not possible that men all of one temperament, all listening to each other's voices and detecting authority in no other voice, could live in real friendship with other men.

History shows us that a religious revival always takes place upon some vital impulse of positive truth, the adherents of the movement going forth filled with new glow and courage; and as long as they are gathering into their body men of all sorts, and their formulas are sufficiently elastic to meet the varied needs of humanity,

The faithful remnant degenerates if it does not become universal.

they conquer evil, and, however few they be, however hostile the whole world to them, theirs may be a healthy charity. In their day and generation they may be "the suffering servant," giving his life for the reformation of the world. But as evolution proceeds within the movement, as homogeneity and a loose tension give place to diversity and the more coherent grouping of men and ideas, then what is it that has happened so often in the world's history? The strongest body of opinion casts out the others; its appeal crystallises into legalism; "the suffering servant" becomes the party of the Pharisees. Has it not happened again and again?

New theologian not abnormal.

Take, as an example of the effect of living in such isolated atmosphere, the sermon you preached in which you referred to the "new theologians," and said that they wanted a religion entirely rational and to do away with all mystery. It is more likely that they would urge against the old theology that the whole of life is so impregnated with

mystery that it is a pity to retain any artificial mystery if it can be proved to be artificial; it is evident that no man who reflects could suppose he could do away with all mystery in life, or that religion could be separated from life. I think no rational man supposes that he can do his thinking in some cold attic of logic wholly shut off from the living-room where, on the warm hearth of his emotions, the practical will is busied with its domestic concerns. It is the whole man who thinks, not one only of his faculties. When you preached that sermon you had evidently got into the habit of picturing the "new theologian" as a creature quite different from yourself, a person negligible because abnormal; but he really is not at all abnormal, as you would know if you sometimes looked at him with the eyes of men that love him. He is often a member of that new body of laity which is being sifted out of your laity. It is just because he is quite normal, realising to some extent the passion and mystery of life, trying in his own way to love God

and his neighbour with all his heart and with all his soul and his strength, as well as with all his mind, that you, who have not been taught to lay much stress upon the devotion of the mind, cannot afford to push him aside. If it is true that in his party there is no deep thinker as yet, there have been longer periods than that covered by the rise of the "new theology" in which the whole church produced no deep thinker.

Dissenters' ideal of worship.

Take, again, a point I once heard you make in speaking of Dissent. You said we must bring beauty to the worship of God. You drew a vivid picture of a bare chapel and of bald religious services. You became enthusiastic at the thought of bringing to God's worship beauty of architecture, beauty of colour, beauty of an ancient liturgy and ritual, which, if it did not seem entirely reasonable, appealed to the æsthetic sense because it was replete with centuries of religious sentiment. In fact, you evidently thought that the Dissenter was a person who either had no sense of beauty

or neglected to devote it to the service of God. Of course it is a matter of history that many of the northern sects at the Reformation started with the idea that it was better to serve God untrammelled by art, just as St. Paul thought it better to be untrammelled by marriage. It was an extreme view that "the common-sense of most" is gradually correcting. The schismatic is not without a sense of beauty. The great poems of Puritan and Lutheran prove that. Go to Edinburgh, built by Calvinists; it is more nobly beautiful than any English town. Without money for education or instruments, the Welsh Dissenters produce music in quality much above that of most English folk of their class. It is notable that many Dissenting hymn-books show incomparably more power of poetic selection than our standard Church collections. Yet they do not consider the elaborations of art appropriate sanctuary offerings. Why? What they offer to God is warmth of the heart, the sublimation of the imagination, intellectual

and moral dignity—the best that they can command or express. And this is the highest sort of warmth and beauty that man can conceive, as you will allow. To say that the Dissenter's public service does not reach the height of beauty is as absurd as to say that the drama did not reach its height of beauty when the stage was bare and grotesque. It is a cant cry, a mischievous half-truth. You ought, in speaking of the Dissenter, to explain that he believes that the adorning of worship should be inward adorning, beauty of vision, dignity of thought, not any outward apparel.

Disagree with him if you like; despise him if you dare! All that satisfies the æsthetic sense is material exactly as was the savour of the fat of rams. To primitive man the savour of a feast was the most delightful thing he could think of; he offered it to God. You have got beyond the fragrance of the burning fat, and you offer to God sound, colour, form, incense, as well as emotion and thought—the best of all kinds that you can think of. The

Dissenter has chosen for his temple offering, not the best of each kind, only the best of the best kind. Now, however, he is beginning to bring the lower offering also.

Now, I don't think that you are individually responsible for your shallow views of your Dissenting brother, whether his theology be "old" or "new." You will find, all the world over, where men are closely bound by party antagonisms, and all allow themselves to take their views of their common opponent from their fellows, they make of him a monster that, if they fear, they will treat with violence; that, when they can afford to sneer, they treat with neglect and unspoken contempt. This is of the very essence of party spirit. And when the party is a religious party it partakes of the worst features of Pharisaism.

I am sure that we must learn, corporately as well as individually, to love the brothers that we can see and do not agree with—to love them so that we make the very best of them at all times — before we can love God in

Wide reading necessary to Christian sympathy.

that really childlike and quiet way which will make us listen for His voice more often than we raise our own to speak to Him. But the party sense of honour toward opponents can only be raised by lifting the individual standard. I wish that you would read books that you do not agree with, and dwell on them till you see, and can sympathise with, their point of view. The habit of breeding in and in, which consists in wedding our own ideas to the scanty stock of others within our own party, will produce the very atrophy it is supposed to avert.

It is no new idea that before we can meet God on His own terms we must meet our neighbour on his ; and there can be no grace in any party contention unless it be the grace of God.

LETTER XIX

You tell me that sinful man needs something more than brotherliness in order to approach God, that men can only fitly approach the Divine presence by the one immortal Sacrifice, that all your teaching centres round the presentation of this to God in the Eucharist, that in this way you are doing your utmost for your people. You go on to say that opening the mind to many different doctrines would be liable to raise questions as to the need of such atoning sacrifice for sinful men; that on this account you are convinced that it would be wrong for you as God's priest to cherish in yourself the habit of promiscuous religious reading.

Faith in atonement essential,

Now, as to the horror of the disease of sin you and I are agreed. We need not

argue as to beliefs we hold in common; but there is no phrase in which our belief about sin can be expressed, no traditional attitude of mind towards it, which is not challenged in the centres of theological thought. In the past, whenever these centres have been stirred by the upheaval of new evidence, the wave that resulted has widened in circular fashion, surging at first with force, lowering its crest as it widened, but inevitably widening over all the surface of religious thought; it is only the depths that are not disturbed by it. Since our last time of great spiritual revival in the Church came with the Oxford Movement, a large amount of new evidence has transpired with regard to the source and history of some of the doctrines that most affect our notions concerning sin and its cure. This new evidence is gradually filtering down into the mind of the common Englishman. All the new knowledge, rationally considered, may not disprove any one of the dogmas you consider essential to Christi-

but new thought required to illuminate old doctrines.

anity. I am not saying that any one of them will be disproved, but I do say that every one of them must certainly come into the court of reason again for a new trial, that its advocates must take a new line of argument if they would have it vindicated, that they must urge different authorities, and set facts in array before the minds of the jury in fresh light. Consider that new family who have come to live at "The Meadows"; they do not go to any place of worship. What a fine young couple they are! What a sturdy family of young Britons they are rearing! They have wealth and leisure; and they lounge by the river on Sundays and read the *Hibbert Journal*. And then, at that rose-embowered cottage at Park End, where you used to have such faithful adherents, who are the new tenants? Two literary ladies, who sometimes come to evensong on a week-day, but never to the Eucharist or to hear you preach. And as you go through your little town, how many of the young artisans, how many of the working-men, can you count among your

Sunday congregation? Do you remember the shrewd-looking cobbler whom we found reading Wells' *New Worlds for Old* to a knot of them? only a few—the rest were in the public-house. But they all turned out that evening when the Socialist orator came to talk. Then there is the well-to-do draper who married the pretty American; they have drawn away quite a little clique to a meeting where something akin to faith-healing is practised.

Threefold challenge to orthodoxy.

Now, here are three forces which are advancing upon your stronghold from different sides. One comes asking the intellectual question, "By whose authority do you call yourself a priest and offer sacrifices?" because the ancient authorities are called in question. The second comes with the practical question, "What ethics do you teach?" and with loud cries for a better distribution of the wealth of the world, and hoots and taunts of derision at men who call themselves worshippers of Jesus of Nazareth and stand for the existing order of privilege

and caste. And the third comes with a challenge as to the power and sphere of prayer.

Let us grant, for the sake of argument, that your view of the church and of the way men should worship God is absolutely true. All the same, every item of it is called in question. Not long ago men took Christianity on the valuation of the clergy, or they left it altogether; now men are trying to fit Christianity into the facts of life as they are found in history or as they see them to-day, and life looks very different to this group of persons and to that. In the process of sifting all Christians must fall back upon some rock which is not being assailed, some common ground on which they can find footing, and on it stand to fight their battle. The only rock on which they can rest is the personal experience of God's voice in their hearts. It is this, and this alone, which brings the peace which science and research and social institutions can neither give nor take away.

The inward light the only refuge.

Of course I believe that, on the widest and most critical review of the history of the church, of religion generally, and of human instincts and requirements, it is quite intelligent for a man to hold the sacrificial view of the Eucharist; and, holding it, it is right that he should act upon it and work on faithfully. In view of all the facts we at present know, it seems to me, I repeat, a legitimate opinion. But in this age of the world, unless such a man be in some way mentally deficient, or unless he be held by such grovelling poverty that he can neither buy cheap books nor obtain time to glance at them, it appears to me he is altogether over-stepping the bounds of common-sense and humility when he refuses to recognise as comrades those whose interest in Christianity does not centre in the high sacramental view. It is a matter of opinion whether the hierarchical system is the only legitimate development of Christianity. Every learner

Differing theories of church consonant with spiritual insight.

is rapidly hearing that it is not possible to claim the earliest authority for it. You know the simple argument. The word "ἱερεύς" was familiar to all those who wrote the New Testament. Jewish priests, heathen priests—they were part of the commonplace of life everywhere. Applying the word constantly to the officials of other religions, why did these writers not apply it to the officials of the Christian religion? However firmly we may hold that it was a right development, we must admit that there is no evidence that compels either reason or pious sentiment to accept it on the authority of Scripture. But you believe in the test of Scripture. On what ground, then, do you assume that the unconvinced in your parish show spiritual obliquity in rejecting it? This, of course, brings up the whole question of your uncordial treatment of your thinking neighbours. There is, I think, a text—you see I can quote texts too—about leaving your gift at the altar and first being reconciled to your brother.

Indeed, I have long thought that here, just here, was the clue to that tragic lack of the personal touch of God that is often so obvious in the religious thought of our rural parishes. The religious man is so intent upon sins against, and reconciliation with, the God whom he has not seen that he forgets to be reconciled to the brother whom he has seen. Yet every mystic enforces by practical experience the same rule: it is only by processes of fuller and fuller love that we can ascend to God.

LETTER XX

THANKS for Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*. He is always breezy and amusing; and there are in this book one or two passages which incline one to put him among the poets.

When I had finished it, and read your letter, I was reminded of a friend who came once to convert me to theosophy. He was himself a convert, quite full of the subject, and set forth the theosophic doctrines at great length and with amazing clarity. Then, at my dazed brain he hurled his concluding remark, "At least you must admit that there is a good deal of truth in it." I was certainly forced to make this admission, the only difference between us being that in my view that truth was not

Chesterton among the prophets!

what he was calling theosophy. The kind of argument for orthodoxy that Mr. Chesterton propounds seems to me uncommonly wholesome for the people who have never realised that the main Christian dogmas are the outcome of the common religious life of the past, and are not divorced from life, as a filigree ornament is divorced from nature. But to men like you, who are inclined to think that any Christian deviation from the traditional view of Christianity must be as tawdry and artificial as a filigree ornament, his unconscious begging of all questions that separate him from schismatic Christians must be unwholesome. There is, of course, an immense amount of truth in the book; the only question is, is that truth distinctive of what he would call "orthodoxy"?

Take, for example, the splendid imaginative picture with which he ends his chapter on "Paradoxes." It comes after he has shown that the orthodox church was always being pulled toward one extreme or another on various questions, that it always

avoided sectarian narrowness by holding firmly two irreconcilable views on a difficult question. He falls easily into the following splendid passage (p. 184) :—

There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity : and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad. It was the equilibrium of a man behind madly rushing horses, seeming to stoop this way and to sway that, yet in every attitude having the grace of statuary and the accuracy of arithmetic. The Church in its early days went fierce and fast with any warhorse ; yet it is utterly unhistoric to say that she merely went mad along one idea, like a vulgar fanaticism. She swerved to left and right, so as exactly to avoid enormous obstacles. * * * To have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom—that would indeed have been simple. It is always simple to fall ; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure ; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the

dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect.

Where I have put stars he interlards the following sort of rattle, apparently quite unconscious that he is shouting nonsense:—

It is easy to be a madman; it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own. It is always easy to be a modernist; as it is easy to be a snob.

Difficulty of keeping one's head.

No reflective man doubts that practical truth and righteousness are always won from successive errors by the superb toil of remaining sane. The doctrine of the "golden mean" was an effort to express it, and can be considered, according to our interpretation of it, puerile or grand. We often hear that the broad base of the British throne is compromise, and compromise appears to us petty or magnificent as we picture the greatness of the issues at stake and the meaning of compromise. That Christianity in Western Europe has made a magnificent fight against follies and

errors and sins is plain to every historian. This may be taken as an argument for Christianity in general, and not merely for that form of it which Mr. Chesterton calls "orthodoxy." "The common-sense of most" has always divided between good and evil in every time and place, on the level then reached by humanity. From your point of view and mine the question is whether this selection of good from evil by the majority in Christendom has really involved anything that every "schismatic" Christian to-day would not admit. Surely every "schismatic" believes that "orthodoxy" includes that body of doctrine and morals which he holds in common with the Catholic Church. But this common ground is not what Mr. Chesterton means by "orthodoxy." There is a tremendous truth in his figure, which would be accepted even by "modernists"—for aught I know, by "snobs," who, he seems to think, have some mystical connection with modernists.

Mr. Chesterton rides full tilt at what

he calls "the suicide of thought," *i.e.* the sceptical habit of mind, and, galloping past, shouts out that "since Christianity was shattered at the Reformation, the virtues as well as the vices are running round loose"; and accordingly he challenges the "sceptical habit of mind" by calling it "the virtue of humility or modesty running round loose." Modesty and humility, which he seems to think synonymous, have, in his view, run from their place in the "organ of ambition" and "settled on the organ of conviction." This he proves by the fact that sober men think that humility ought to be exercised in matters of conviction as well as in matters of ambition; he objects to men thinking that the attitude of seeking to know what the Divine Mind thinks and the Divine Will wills, instead of affirming what God thinks and wills, is as true an exercise of humility as curbing avarice and ambition. I am not concerned just now to argue that dogmatism is not humble, but would merely point out

The gallery in Chesterton's theatre.

that the Reformation made no difference in human nature in this respect. It is quite possible for other virtues to get misplaced. The sense of merit, for instance, which ought to live from man to man, may be vividly conceived and acted upon as between man and God. The virtue of faith, which ought to be exercised toward personal qualities, may be violently exercised towards mere things. In these cases self-approbation may be said, in Mr. Chesterton's untenable psychology, to have passed from the organ of brotherliness to the organ of worship, and the virtue of faith to have passed from the organ of love to the organ of credulity. I do not suggest that this—what may be called the running-round-looseness of the virtues—has been less evident since the Reformation than before, but I am quite sure it was very evident before. The suggestion that humanity is all tangled up in its own ethical ideals because a religious system suited to the Latin races was thought by the northern races to be unsuited to them,

suggests strongly to me that the gallery in Mr. Chesterton's theatre happens to be filled with credulous folk, whose applause he considers a sufficient test of his common-sense.

Again, he gives a graphic description of a man "too mentally modest to believe," a man who seems to me better described by Prof. William James' phrase, "the slave of the magazine article." The man this phrase brings before us is a very real person; he is half-educated, and has gradually gained the idea that in religion everything is to be questioned and nothing positively affirmed. This undoubtedly produces in him paralysis of the religious faculty, in fact, he only really lives when under the influence of the passions of patriotism or party spirit or ambition, or perhaps merely the desire to make money. But that in these provinces he is efficient enough proves that the average half-educated sceptic does not carry his scepticism to the length Mr. Chesterton says is inevitable—that is, to

The "slave of the magazine article."

incapacity for any conviction. When he does that he becomes a fool and negligible. The real reason why he has come to doubt all religious dogmas, all philosophical theories, is that he has not got within himself any sort of conscious intercourse with God, and because, in the renaissance of historic knowledge, he has found facts that have startled him out of his merely traditional beliefs, and which, as he thinks, are not adequately dealt with by his religious teachers. Having found, as he thinks, that the best men may be mistaken in one department of life, he is ready to assume possible error in other departments. But he continues to live and act strenuously upon a working hypothesis in commerce, in politics, in social relations, and says, when Mr. Chesterton closes with him at a street corner, "I may be wrong, but this is the theory on which I act"; he makes the "venture of faith" in all departments except the religious, because these departments seems to him vital. He sees no compelling religious probability, because

he is not a religious person. Should he be in any degree a religious person he has convictions he cannot put into words; but, because he says he "may be wrong," Mr. Chesterton at once knocks him down, and being unable to check the steed of his volubility, dashes out of the lists on the other side, still ejaculating hot words about "the suicide of thought."

Legs and the man.

One marvels that a writer who can produce scraps of such excellent wit, such splendid poetry, can also pour out such vanity of phrases. His pages on Christian joy are nothing short of splendid, but he interleaves them with the absurd statement that pagan joy only lives on where Christianity is sacerdotal. (By the way, I wish he could see the Methodist negroes of the Southern States, who are filled with a quite pagan joy.) He illustrates the assertion that laziness and fatigue, rather than bustle, are the characteristics of our age, by the statement that, though our streets are noisy with the vehicles of speedy traffic, this is due, not

to human activity, but to human repose. Without so much as a glance at the child-like and primary idea that a man who does his errands in a taxi-cab does ten where he used to do one, Mr. Chesterton says, "There would be more activity if people were simply walking about!" Well, if legs are humanity, there would; and if I were Mr. Chesterton I would here exclaim, "The Lord taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man!" and assume a connection of thought.

A defender of the faith.

On the whole, it appears to me that those who uphold this book as a sustained work on theology are badly in need of a champion. I had a dream after falling asleep, a jolly, comfortable dream, in which a frolicsome elephant came crashing out of a wood with a cardinal's hat cocked over one eye and a missal in the curl of his trunk. A number of pious men bowed low in respect and chanted a hymn which began, "Behold, a new defender of the faith!" And all the time I had that curious back-of-the-

mind knowledge which one has in dreams, that the elephant had merely found a cardinal napping in the forest and was having a game with his possessions. There was something in the hymn, too, about "all the cardinal virtues," but I will not repeat it lest you should suppose that I had contracted, even in sleep, the habit of gaining picturesque effects by a loose use of language.

But the question I want you to think over is, could you pass over so much inconsequence of thought in a book that was not on your own favourite side of our controversy? If in you the virtue of "believing all things" has passed over from your organ of love to mankind to your organ of party spirit, you are in a bad way.

LETTER XXI

If I were to pile negatives until they reached the height of the everlasting hills, I could not adequately express my dissent from your assumption that when the new learning becomes popular, the unity of the Christian church will be the boiling-point of the controversy. I do not believe that one sensible man exists who does not hold unity to be of the very essence of the church. Enemies and lovers of the church are unanimous on that head. How can you think otherwise? The very *raison d'être* of the church is to bring to one purpose all the conflicting characters who share its life, as an absorbing purpose unifies the conflicting desires in a man's heart. The great principle of the Christian society, as set forth by every

Unity of the essence of the church.

writer of the New Testament, was unity. The early church was a united society for the promotion of the knowledge of the universal kingdom of God. There does not exist to-day a society or body calling itself Christian which, in ideal, is not united within itself, which does not exist to proclaim the unity of the kingdom—of God with man, and of man with God, and of men with one another.

Nature of the unity.

The controversy that has long been upon us, that is ever becoming more widespread and popular, is as to the nature of that unity. Is unity in Christ to be (1) an invisible bond binding every man to an invisible head and only thus to one another? Or (2) is it to form various visible bodies on earth in visible harmony with one another? Or (3) is it to mean one visible body on earth, and only that? You think —as far as I can gather from your words— you really think, that the question lies between the last possibility and nothing! How can you?

But of course I grant that there are certain forces working in nature and humanity which seem to tend to one visible body. Men undoubtedly grow more cosmopolitan as they grow in knowledge. This gives us the idea that all nations may become one nation. Empires tend to absorb little states; this gives us the notion that the ideal Empire may rule the whole earth. We deplore the contentions and antagonisms between Christian bodies at home; on the mission-field we perceive their absurdity as we seem incapable of doing at home. We are prone to think that real unity of spirit, which we all acknowledge to be necessary, must work an outward unity. We cast out into space and the future a vague advertisement of prayer and hope —"Wanted, one grand, whole, and only church, with the necessary elasticity for the group and the individual." No one can say that this is not a sane line of thought and a legitimate prayer, a legitimate ideal of unity.

Outward conformity a legitimate ideal.

But you have not given sufficient thought to the sanity of the view which has opposed, and still more strongly will oppose, this. Nature tends to greater and greater variety. Not only is no leaf like another, no tree like another, but there are great and little divisions among trees — many sorts of oaks, as well as all the different trees, from the bramble to the fir. So in all living nature, vegetable and animal; so in the affairs of men thus far. The trend is to visible difference; the unity is deeply hidden. If there is design in nature, God must prefer visible variety of all sorts; He displays difference while He hides the bond of union. If there be a Providence guiding human destiny, and more particularly guiding man through his religious instincts, are we not to take from history some indication for the future of the church?

Nature hides unity, displays difference.

What sort of unity is possible in human affairs? The only real human units are the family and the whole human race. The family is a real thing; the children of two

parents have a real unity—they bear an unalterable relation to parents and brothers. But it is obvious that this family is transient; it is only made for the express purpose of being divided up into new families. These resulting families may be called one tribe, but plainly they can only be called that by a fiction, as half the parents, in the first instance at any rate, must be of another family. The tribe is only an artificial unity, created by the fiction that the maternal strain may be ignored when it brings in foreign blood; the child of the clansman and foreign mother is actually as closely related to the mother's clan. The less foreign blood there is, the shorter lived the tribe, for the tribe only exists by being broken up into other tribes, giving out its daughters, taking in their daughters. The processes of separation and accretion proceed side by side. When the tribe becomes unwieldy it divides. With divisions come alliances of tribes. Nations come into being, and increase not only by alliance but by conquest.

Division and syncretism in nations.

The conquered tribes are absorbed. Nations bear to primitive man very much the relation that the planets bear to primæval gas; but we believe that humanity is a higher form of creation, has a higher destiny than matter. Planets, losing all heat, swing on dead; nations, in declining, have so far bequeathed many of the highest elements of their progress to the flux of humanity which goes to make up new successive nations. National organisation seems to be becoming at once vaster and more elastic; but for that very reason are not national characteristics, national ideals, becoming stronger, more different from one another? Is it at all likely that, even if we arrive at "the parliament of man, the federation of the world," the federated nations will be similar in government, in organisation, in character? Do national ideals and methods grow faster in times of war or peace? Certainly in peace. So that a universal harmony would make them stronger rather than wipe them away. In time of war the national ideals already

attained find their most emphatic expression; but war imposes and imports an interchange of national ideals, which in time cause a modification of the national ideal. The assertion of the real unseen unity of the whole human race, which would prevent war, would, I think, produce the greatest diversity, not only between nations, but between groups, orders, and societies within nations.

Religious history tells the same story. The "process of the suns" brings the same sort of change in the religious life that we see in tribal life. Religions of which we do not know the beginnings have divided; each new sect starts from one reformer; with its growth it takes back modifications of ideas and customs at first left behind. In its new vitality it attracts other religions foreign to it, conquers, but absorbs much of what it supersedes. Then come periods of reflection; new reformers arise within it; sects divide it.

Take, for example, the religion of Zarathushtra. It started as a sect of the

old Indo-Iranian religion. It would seem to have grown by allying itself with older magian cults. Then it divided into Parseeism and Mithraism, the one spreading toward the rising of the sun and remaining to this day, the other travelling toward the sunset and, in dying, giving more than one festival to the supreme faith that conquered it. Nor is Parseeism to-day without divisions. Again, regard Buddhism. Itself a sect of the old Hindoo religion, it has become as different in different localities as are the Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Catholic forms of Christianity. It is a reasonable opinion that this breaking or division is an evidence of life, not death; that in this way and no other the streams that flow from the throne of God can water the nations; that if it be a universal law of life, the supreme religion will exhibit it in highest degree. I am not asking you to accept this view. If I seem to throw stress upon it, it is because I think that you do not regard that side fairly. I believe the fast that God requires

Diversity a sign of religious vitality.

of us in many things is to hold our opinions in suspense.

But of this I am convinced — the strictest Churchman is not, in moral insight, superior to the man who thinks that wherever there is Christian vitality there will be a change from sameness to diversity; from the more elastic union of widespread conformity to the closer tension of differing sects having fellowship within themselves, united only as different forms of one Christian life, and composing a splendid harmony.

LETTER XXII

I HAVE just been reading together those three latest books on early church history.[1] They were all interesting, but Gwatkin you ought especially to read, because your bias is different from his. We get the same facts about the beginning in them all. In each way of setting the facts there is, of course, evidence of a different prepossession—Romanist, Presbyterian, and —but I shall not characterise Dr. Gwatkin's outlook! However, the prepossessions do not affect the honesty with which these earliest facts are set forth. It is made obvious that there must have been among the local churches at the end of St. Paul's life great differences. It is impossible to

[1] Monsignor Duchesne's *Early History of the Church*; Dr. Lindsay's *Church and Ministry in the Early Centuries*; and Prof. Gwatkin's *Early Church History*.

suppose that the conduct and opinions of the church in Jerusalem could have resembled those in some of the remote Greek or Roman settlements to which the faith had been carried. The very few facts that we have to guide us point to great variety. If we assume that there must have been uniformity then we emphasise considerations that go toward proving it. To many, reviewing the same facts, it must seem that the church was without uniformity, that the Spirit of Christ was brooding upon the hearts of Christian congregations, and saying, "Let there be truth," "Let there be fellowship," "Let there be variety," "Let there be adaptability to environment." To such readers the story of the early church will seem the story of creation over again.

But whatever degree of uniformity may have obtained, what was the guarantee that the scattered church would not break up into many different religions, having little in common? There was no guarantee except the power of the brooding Spirit

of Christ, saying always, "Let there be truth," "Let there be fellowship." And what guarantee has there ever been, or is there now, except this sustaining fiat of the ever-present Spirit?

Is a truly Catholic conformity possible?

I had a letter the other day from a friend who said that if the creed and practice of the church could be made much broader, could synthesise all the now isolated spiritual values of the sects around some such motto or creed as, "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly," Christians who refused to enter such a church would be justly blamed. I think in this remark we have the root itself of spiritual warfare —the belief that the exercise of blame is legitimate on the ground of any difference of religious opinion. For bad deeds, for bad motives—if the motive is admitted—one must blame men; these are the fruits of the visible life of which we must judge. For teaching in the name of a religious body opinions which that body does not endorse, we must also blame men. But

to blame men whose lives are moral, who are casting out the devils of materialism and vice in the name of Christ, because they do not enter into some outward body which seems to us to hold latitude for all, is saying, in effect, that we can estimate the workings of the Spirit of Christ, that we cannot trust that Spirit to shepherd men of good will and guide them into all truth; but that we must do it. Or perhaps a better figure is, that we cannot trust the Spirit, in the architecture of the Holy City, to build upon every good foundation some edifice that will add to the perfection of the whole.

For look now at two considerations concerning this conception of the culpability of not entering into some outward fold when sufficiently large. The first people who would utterly refuse to enter it consciously and voluntarily would be the people who thought it too large. We should have at once, then, within the fold, the sects of the "narrow circle" and the "wide circle." The "wides" would

insist that the "narrows" were within, spite of their screams; but it must be admitted that the unity would be theoretic rather than actual! The "wides," like my correspondent, would have to insist that those who remained outwardly quite without their line were outcasts and morally defective. Towards these the widest of the "wides" would become Pharisees —"these people that know not the law are cursed"; to some of those within they would become tyrants. No; I cannot but think that the Architect alone knows the ground plan of the heavenly city which we call the church. As far as the ages in which humanity will live in this world are concerned, the church here visible is but just begun. Some of the foundations were laid far back in civilisations now buried deep beneath the sands of time, and some of the first courses of stone are only now being laid. There is probably no honest speculation of modern times that will not be built into some splendid gate or conning tower; and every

honest heresy of the past, however effete it may seem to us, may be already exquisitely worked into some wall, if only as a humorous gargoyle.

What definition, then, is there of this living church, of which our Lord, in the fulness of time, came to be the corner-stone, and which history shows to have grown and grown out of all sorts of materials, to include all sorts of angles and corners still to us unmeaning? Is it as yet defined only in the mind of God?

We need not discuss the question whether our Lord came to found a church or not. Let us rather ask ourselves whether we have the least idea what the magnificence or extent of His church is, or is going to be. What is it that has always most hindered the building but the confusion generated by the idea that we are able to understand the whole plan of the Master Builder?

LETTER XXIII

IT was good of you to supply me with Figgis's *Hulsean Lectures*.[1] I have not forgotten the book—in fact, I have read it through. He does not minimise the problem of the age in his endeavour to prove that the high sacramental view of Christianity has pragmatical sanction; what he does minimise is the force of thought and spiritual life that is flowing through men who cannot perceive this sanction. All that he says of the views of "new theologians" would naturally hold if he refers to the more foolish camp-followers of that movement. I have come across some polemical sermons lately by "new theologians," which illustrate this same fallacy of setting up the

Dr. Figgis and "new theologians."

[1] *The Gospel and Human Needs.*

camp-follower of the opposite party and triumphantly knocking him down by way of disposing of the vanguard of the army. The riff-raff of the regiment in which Figgis fights is also easily vanquished in this manner.

Dr. Figgis perfectly sees the intellectual difficulty arising from the lack of critical evidence on many points which the church has hitherto accepted as historically proved, and the pragmatical argument he employs ought to have weight. But it is not brotherly, it is not even at all neighbourly, to assume that any sane and thoughtful men could mean by their words and phrases what he evidently attributes to the phrases of other schools of thought. As he says, there are materialists who are more reverent than the earlier materialists, and also there are determinists and other varieties of non-Christians who are quite earnest-minded and upright; but when he groups these with "new theologians," and rails at their different fads, as if pouring viols of scorn

An unneighbourly critic.

on "new theology," he leaves the latter unscathed. "New theologians," I take it, recognise Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master; accusations against them, to be of value, must fit the facts.

Thus it is that a large part of *The Gospel and Human Needs* seems to me to hit as wide of the mark in dealing with "new theology" as does the ultra-Protestant when he rails at the Ritualist, calling him a mere formalist. You and I would tell such a Protestant that, while one who believes in a divinely appointed ritual may be a mere formalist, it is certain that if he has in him any power of reflection, any depth of feeling, he cannot be a mere formalist, and in that case his belief in one sacred form of worship must widen into and include a belief in the Divine appointment of all right forms, all right deeds, all matter in the right place. The truly religious Ritualist and the truly religious Quaker come very near to one another, because to each all washing is, in its degree, a sacrament of purification,

all eating a sacrament of communion; all matter is the body of God; all right-mindedness is radiant with the Light Within. There is a great difference between them—nothing less than the whole sacerdotal theory of religion—but neither of them can explain himself to the other—neither can learn from the other, till they recognise all they have in common.

In the same way it is futile for this writer to class Christians who doubt the Christian doctrines of the Virgin Birth or the physical Resurrection, or who give a merely rational explanation of the Christian sacraments, with those who reject mystery and deny the supernatural. In the first place, the slightest investigation would show him that men whose theology is called "new" believe that all things are the revelation of God's mind, and therefore cannot be guilty, as he avers they are, of rejecting the revelation of small things. Consider for a moment the marvel of movement within your hearthstone. As you sit by it, read

Mystery admitted by all.

page after page upon the newest theory of matter—of solar systems whirling on within each visible speck. Then think of the marvels of the atomic theory, or of the beautiful variations in the exquisite forms of the most rudimentary life revealed by the biologist's microscope. No sane man is such a fool as not to realise to-day that the marvel of the creative intelligence is manifested as much in the little as in the big. The hidden depths of its manifestation, which have one after another been unfolded within the last century, have taken from every imaginative mind the force which the adjectives of magnitude had as applied to God. The bulk of "new theologians" believe also that men can choose between good and evil, and that God is both immanent and transcendent: if they then reject the word "supernatural" it must be because they make the word "natural" cover both God and His freedom.

Modern men do not like the word "supernatural," not, I think, because the sense of wonder and mystery is less, but

because the marvels which science has revealed so far surpass anything we were in the habit of considering supernatural that to attempt to draw a line between the natural and supernatural appears to many reverent minds sacrilegious, and to many reflective minds ridiculous. A friend of mine who is a "progressive" in theology and has also embraced the vocation of healing the sick by prayer and faith, reports some marvellous successes, but describes them as in accordance with the laws of thought, of faith, of our inward being. Now, what would be the use of railing at this woman for rejecting the supernatural? I know a man who has recently seen an apparition. He believes that it was "veridical"; he thinks that it brought him a message of encouragement from the other side of death. He insists that there must, therefore, be a law which governs the appearance of ghosts. He believes that the ghost, when it appeared, was free to smile or frown, that he is free to accept its message

Super-normal not necessarily supernatural.

or reject it. He thanks God for His goodness in sending this ghost on this errand. All this happens, he is convinced, within the reign of universal law.

Is it not obvious that if such people as these, and with them a public that accept without a murmur of incredulity such phenomena as the X-rays, doubt certain points of Christian doctrine, they do so solely because they do not think the evidence equally good and because they do not see the value of the belief? The legitimate answer to such unbelief must concern the evidence for the doctrine or its pragmatic value. It is useless to scold because they do not use the old phrases. If half a dozen trusted scientists recorded the appearance of the Cross in the sky, the Western world would accept their dictum, because they believe science to be disinterested in its search for truth. It is useless to quarrel with "new theologians," or even with the temper of the age, over the word "supernatural."

The extraordinary depths of unfore-

shadowed surprise which are unfolded to us in the rich personalities of our friends are miracles. Browning has summed up this miracle of friendship in a line—

Personality the great miracle.

> Then God's own smile came out :
> That was thy face.

If people believe at all in personality —and the instinctive belief in personal freedom is as strong to-day as it ever was —these and all the other wonders of the universe come to the reflective mind as miracles ; how much more to all those who are religious ? It does not seem to me to be sensibility to the miraculous, but insensibility to it, that makes any theist think that the church can draw the line between what God does in an orderly and calculable way, and what He is conceived as doing by the fiat of His will breaking through the calculable. For purposes of scientific convenience all things believable are viewed as calculable : but scientists do not declare the Virgin Birth more

marvellous than other already classified marvels of nature. All they say is, that this, or any proved fact of our Lord's birth or death must, from the standpoint of science, be explicable on the physical plane. From the standpoint of the idealist, or of the Christian thinker, it seems to me equally true to say that nothing is explicable on the physical plane, that everything is a miracle. No wise man can ignore either aspect. No man of faith, in whose heart a reverent contemplation of the marvels of nature is habitually blended with contemplation of the love of God, can say with the strictly orthodox, "the age of miracle is passed"; or "here and thus God broke through for our salvation, and not otherwise."

Religion stands only by personal power.

It was not the transgression of nature that attested the truth of Christianity; it was personal power. Power in the mother, if you will; power in the Son; power to realise on earth the glories of the kingdom of the heavens just within the veil of the

flesh ; power to bring God's strength into body and heart and mind ; power to evoke this energy in the spirit of man, and to give him the vision of the power of a personal God. And to-day it is personal power alone that can attest whatever we claim to be God's message to men. It matters nothing whether we call power natural or supernatural ; he who out of his own great health dispenses health, who by his own great sanity bestows sanity, who by his own great passion for God kindles the strength of that passion in even the weak or the wicked—his life, and such as his, are the only breaking through of God that really meets our necessities. If you and I and the writer of *The Gospel and Human Needs* admit that Christianity offers to perform this miracle in its apostles, we are so far agreed.

The positive content of this book is a striking pragmatic argument for orthodoxy, which may fitly be urged for all it is worth. Some considerations adduced do not appeal to me ; but as they will appeal

to others, they are, on pragmatic principles, desirable. In pragmatism all is fair—as in love and war; all its appeals are fair if they appeal. But any appeal, to be Christian, must be made with a sense of brotherliness towards any possible opponent. Our Lord did not quarrel with the temper of His own age, but with the tyranny of the past. I wish we could have a manual of devotion which might contain maxims applicable to religious controversy, because undoubtedly futile antagonisms paralyse all true prayer. My maxims would be on this wise—

Rules for Christian controversy.

(1) It is folly to be angry with any honest attempt to define the indefinable.

(2) It is mischievous to quarrel about terms which are only efforts to express the inexpressible.

(3) The way your opponent puts his religion is not his religion.

(4) His words never mean to him what they would mean to you.

(5) His words will never carry him to the logical conclusion you so easily foresee.

(6) It is unbrotherly to assume that you understand your opponent and that he does not understand you.

(7) To sit in the seat of the scornful is worse than open ungodliness or wickedness.

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LETTER XXIV

Historic facts proved by consensus of historians.

WITH regard to history, it seems to me that we can only consider those facts historically proved which all responsible historians, whatever their prepossessions, agree upon. It is, no doubt, quite true, as Figgis says, that the prepossession, the interpretative hypothesis, is the historian's tool, as much as the bones of the past provided for him in his old documents. The zoologist, getting one bone, claims to know from it exactly what the complete animal must have been; he reconstructs him in our museums and no one challenges his reconstruction. The historian's work differs from that of the zoologist in that his bones may be made to fit into various reconstructions of past life. But the historian's task is similar; he, too,

must make the past an organic whole standing before us. While his bones may lend themselves to several different reconstructions, it is his business to make his own reconstruction convincing. But it certainly cannot be the business of those who would bind men's consciences to insist that all men must accept one of these historical reconstructions as *de fidei* in the same sense in which they are bound to acknowledge the bare bones from which they are made to be actual fragments of a living past. A man may, and must, accept some reconstruction, and argue for his own assumptions, but he cannot treat those who doubt them as though they were hostile to fact.

Figgis seems to argue that the whole question between a historian who accepts Nicene Christianity and one who does not, is that of a presupposition in favour of Christianity and a presupposition hostile to it. He says :—

Nothing in that investigation (the investigation of New Testament history) has resulted which hinders the sound scholar from Nicene

Christianity *apart from other hostile presuppositions*.[1] (The italics are his.)

A beam in the eye.

Consequently, he apparently sweeps aside all criticism that does not result in Nicene Christianity, on the ground of antecedent hostility having rendered it invalid. This seems to me not only circular logic but unneighbourly.

To assume that a man, having studied the facts of church history and church documents, feels that to justify his Christian creed he must restate his faith in the terms of modern thought—to assume that such a man is actuated by hostility to the faith, is to judge him in matters which go on in the innermost temple of his soul, where none but God can enter. We have the command, "Judge not," and I think it is agreed that this must apply to the inner workings of a man's heart, his emotions and motives, because by the outward fruit —his visible life—we are obliged to judge a man, and, moreover, we are expressly

[1] *The Gospel and Human Needs*, p. 60.

told to judge religious teachers in that way. The good critics of all sorts deny the charge of hostility; you affirm it by marking this passage with approval. If the words of the familiar text are true, this sort of judgment is one of those sins of the spirit which block the spiritual sight. If we agree with this argument as to past history, to what will it lead us in interpreting the present? If we misjudge the historian who presumes to doubt something we think vital to the history of Jesus, we shall misjudge all who base their arguments on that doubt.

The simple eye.

Let us suppose for a moment that what you think impossible is possible, and that somewhere in the thought and conclusions of these sceptical critics there is a great message for the age. It is quite clear that we should not be in a position to perceive it. I grant you that if there be this message we shall be forced to perceive it sooner or later; but if the reception of truth is forced upon a man it rends

instead of healing. Consider how differently a divine message in any age must fall upon him whose heart is tempered by all those qualities of love to God and man, which cause him to be waiting with hope for the redemption of his age with that exquisite spiritual expectancy which can see in every small and new beginning the hope of some great salvation! The love that is "all tolerance, all trustfulness, all hope" is not easily deceived. If it were so it could not be praised by our Lord as the very eye of truth itself, as the Gospel narrates. Such a temper may often be disappointed, gaining from every wave of disappointment a closer rooting in the hidden things of God; but how triumphantly does it glide into all genuine developments of truth!

If, on the other hand, the critic has no such message for the age, what have we lost by attributing to him loyal motives? and we have conserved that spirit of love that makes the heart more able to understand the voice of Christ to the age through

whomsoever it may come. We have very serious reason to infer from the Gospels that His message to every age will come in the time and manner we least expect. We should do well to cease beating our fellow-servants with the lash of the tongue.

You say, with regard to the poor Roman Catholic population of which I told you the other day, that their inferior morals were probably due to ignorance—to the fact that they could not even read. We all hold it a great disadvantage to man or child in these days that he cannot even read; but the one sort of reading our Lord mentions as essential to the religious teacher is reading "the signs of the times."

LETTER XXV

No, I don't think Dr. Figgis's opinion[1]—that the new way of looking at sin has been manufactured in studious retreats where men know little of the horrible facts of human iniquity—has any truth in it. I think it more usual to find men compelled to seek a new explanation of anything when they are faced by it in its most startling form.

Some classical person said that he felt sure of the immortality of the soul, not when contemplating the lives of good men who, whatever their misfortunes, had the inward joy inseparable from goodness, but when contemplating the lives of the successful wicked, because wickedness prevents men

Sensibility pushes men to new ideas.

[1] *The Gospel and Human Needs*, chap. iv.

from obtaining the slightest real satisfaction from anything; hence the gods would be too cruel to wicked men if for them there was no further hope. And I think, as a matter of fact, that it is in recoil from what might be called the shameless abnormality of moral disorder, the cruel chains of its tyranny, the apparent hopelessness of its slavery, that some saintly men have come to feel that it must be either a form of good or a means to good, if faith and hope are not to reel and die utterly in the agony of contemplation. I have felt the force of this at times very strongly. Orthodox writers are given to assume that they have a more profound sense of sin than the unorthodox, because they think any effort to restate the whole question arises from callousness. When they do so I am disposed to wonder if they have made any adequate diagnosis of this revolting cancer which is eating into the flesh and mind of our race, or considered the lingering and exquisite torture that it inflicts upon the spirit of God and of man.

If they did this I cannot but think they would be expecting some further light from the Spirit of truth. In any case, I think this assumption on the part of the orthodox does not help the cause of truth or righteousness.

But even if the new view of sin were made in the haunts of virtue, it might be none the less valid. The really spiritual perception of sin does not estimate it according to the shocking or mild character of its results, but according to what it is in itself; and the least form of it will be in a sense worse than the greatest, because it is nearer the possibility of good, nearer the walk with God. As, in a marriage of love, the first turning of the heart of the husband toward another woman and away from his wife, even though it be but a brief conscious thought, is, if allowed, something that ought to shock his sense of sin as much as any more open departure from loyalty; so, in the soul's union with God, when she finds herself unable to prevent disloyal thoughts she has as true an instance

of the tyranny of a malign influence as any other exhibition of its force could give. Where there is the spiritual perception of the holiness God desires, the outward circumstances can make very little difference in the soul's appreciation of the revolting character of sin.

Further, I think it may be maintained that insensibility to certain forms of sin characterises all official Christianity, while sensibility to them has marked the protesters of all ages. I refer to those spiritual and worst forms of sin which group themselves around the word "respectability." These are all cruel, horribly cruel, to such human life as is represented by the smoking flax and bruised reed. Every existing Christian organisation displays extreme patience with these sins; while true Christian thought has often revolted against this constant offering of a dastardly exclusiveness to God, and against the cruelty of offering the slave of any vice no better help than a long, slow process of confessions and penances. Lastly, there is a stumbling-

block for many of the true-hearted in the idea that the whole mass of suffering, divine and human, under the reign of sin could be made less by any addition to the vicarious suffering of God.

Triple revolt against orthodox idea.

This triple revolt, encouraged by some of the greatest mystics, has often challenged the forensic view of sin and of the Atonement, and has given various streams of speculation to the modern world; and it arose, surely, from nothing but a first-hand knowledge of the worst that sin has to show. Minds that have vainly challenged sin to see if it have not a soul of good, finding the contemplation of its subtle abominations insupportable, may turn entirely from meditating upon it to seek for some religious method of bringing it to a speedy end. Such method may be impatient, but resort to it arises, not from tolerance, but from intolerance of sin.

One such speculation had root in the idea that the suffering of Christ could not in any way relieve God from the pain

man's sin must give Him unless, indeed, the vicarious suffering were something that acted as a surgeon's knife, cutting out once for all the cancer itself. The only modern expression of this view of the Atonement which I have come across was in the writings of men and women who, last century, were roughly classed together as "holiness people." Their idea was that man could by faith so appropriate the death of Christ as to die always with Him to all the stirrings and actions of sin, and live joyfully to God—"dead to sin and alive to God," as St. Paul said; and they based their doctrine of this sacrament of the whole life on the texts in the Gospels which say that Jesus came to save people from their sins. They urged that there was in these texts no suggestion of salvation from penalty, but from sin itself; and that the sacrifice of Christ, when appropriated by faith, could not have any less effect than complete death to sin. The difficulty about accepting this reasoning was that sinless men and women

Intolerance of sin pushes to new doctrines.

did not appear to walk the earth; hence Christendom sneered at the idea. To me, however, there has always seemed in it some element of truth and hope which is entirely lacking in the orthodox idea of suffering as in some way balancing sin, and in the idea of a lengthy period of human purgation as the best that we can look for from the indwelling power of God. This "holiness doctrine" has cropped up in different guises here and there in all the history of Christendom, and last century it gained quite a foothold in Protestant thought. It was quite true, as every one admitted, that its upholders did not appear to be clad in any conspicuous robe of perfection; but perhaps it may be urged on their behalf that they were not able to exercise adequate faith; the mere telepathic weight of the rest of the church, denying this sort of efficacy for the Atonement, may have dimmed their own effort to appropriate what God had—as they phrased it—already done for them. Or, it may be urged, secondly, that they had a

perfection which could not be recognised because of the prevalence of false ideals of perfection. The common ideal was then largely negative; its positive content seems to have been looked for chiefly in artificial urbanity of personal walk and conversation. Christian perfection may consist in giving one's life—all the rough and tumble forces at a man's command, all that he is and all that he tries to be—to putting the next generation in conditions in which they can understand God's highest revelation better than does this; if so, the polished and classical standard of moral beauty which was applied to the early "holiness teachers" was a false one.

In any case, "holiness doctrine" was certainly not deserving of the sneers poured upon it. It fitted the facts of the joy and the triumphant expansion of the early church better than some other theories. We may well ask, could men who felt they were bound in the chains of habits from which they could only be gradually emancipated by perpetual con-

"Holiness doctrine."

fessions and penances and a long duration of purgatory in the next world, express the joy that throbs in every page of the New Testament, spite of the whole world against the writers?

"Christian Science," "Higher Thought," "New Theology."

There is no doubt that the body of men who, some forty years ago, took up this "holiness doctrine" were surrounded by false standards. Most of their followers harked back to puritanical ideas which were at the time passing away, and preached the necessity of men giving up this, that, and the other amusement and occupation, and prostrating their reason to the fetish of verbal inspiration and to theories based upon the most eclectic use of sacred words. But the impact of this joyful conception of the force of the supernatural grace of the Atonement escaped from these narrow devotees into a larger air, and can be distinctly traced in the theories of "Christian Science," "Higher Thought," the "New Theology," etc. These theories all differ from their prototype, but they beat with

the joyful pulse of emancipation. It is quite true that many of their dilettante advocates know nothing of the horror of sin; but neither do they know any other depth or height.

Within these movements we get the views that Dr. Figgis thinks are produced by ignorance of sin. If we analyse them we find in them all the intolerance of sin which characterised the "holiness movement." The two first are efforts to supply the practical needs of religious faith by theories based on an idealist philosophy. They seek to give men courage to count righteousness and health theirs by telling them that their true selves, hid with Christ in God, are united to God, and that their conscious selves can, if they will, do and be all things in the strength of that vision. Many of us cannot accept the extreme view of the phenomenal relation of the things of sense to reality, but we all accept some version of it. The jibes and caricatures made at the expense of the adherents of this great wave of thought,

which has as yet no very intelligent expression that I can find, have no doubt acted like the proverbial curses and gone home to roost. The third form of the movement,—called "New Theology"—as far as I can see, preaches much the same practical philosophy with regard to sin, but leaves out the physical health. It is a more purely reasoning aspect of the movement which in its other streams seems to gather the forces of mysticism and magic, and to minimise reason. The quarrel of the zealous Churchman with all these good folk is that they will not call themselves "miserable sinners." The objection would be more valid if that constant confession of sin caused men to "cease from sin." Unfortunately it does not, and the practice of the presence of sin in mental habits of unceasing contrition and talk about temptations acts on many natures as the police reports of certain sorts of crime act on the vicious class. It is too like the practice of the presence of the devil to seem salutary. In any case it may be said for the new

doctrines that they are not tolerant of any continuance in the sins of covetousness or the sins of conventionality, nor do they give the rein to vice. They have their root and continuance in intolerance of sin, in the faith that God is saving us from sin—not from its punishment merely—and in love of the sinner. I confess that the church's way of stating this same intolerance, this same faith, this same love, seems to me more rational ; but the trouble is that these three points, emphasised by the newer view, are by the orthodox constantly slurred over, while emphasis is given to an unsuccessful purgative process and a merely future salvation.

LETTER XXVI

I THINK there is a distinction that enters into the question of penitence to which we do not give enough attention—it is the difference between true consciousness of the self—the power to relate thought to oneself as the thinker—and the self-consciousness which inwardly is a disproportionate degree of self-attention and outwardly a phase of bad manners. We all know how subtle are the signs by which self-consciousness may be displayed, how disagreeably it affects our communication with its subject. We scarcely know whether the self-conscious man is to be more blamed or pitied, whether he strikes us as more absurd or more pathetic, but in any case he is not a person that we can entirely respect or with whom we can

Self-consciousness.

enter into easy relationship. And yet it is difficult to connect this peculiarity—which often seems a disease of the nerves—with any other bad characteristic. Such an one is not necessarily selfish. He is seldom proud. If he is vain he is more often enduring the agonies of mortification than the elation of supposing himself acceptable.

It seems to me that a great deal of what passes for sense of guilt is really self-consciousness of guilt. The constant dwelling on self in any aspect is an attitude of the soul which must prevent God's pleasure in it, just as lower forms of self-consciousness prevent pleasing intercourse between men. And I think the touchstone which distinguishes between true penitence and a disproportionate degree of attention to one's own transgressions must be the penitent soul's attitude toward other men's worth. For I think that true penitence causes us to rate other men very high. At any rate, when we see people dwelling upon themselves, if only upon their sinful-

Meditating on sin.

ness, we often find that they are also eager to belabour other men for their sins, and are apt to pass a hostile and uncharitable criticism upon every one who does not agree with them in religious opinion.

Now this, which I think is easily proved by any one who will observe different types of religious life, is a fact which makes me very suspicious of that which one frequently hears asserted and more often assumed—that men ought to think more about their sins than they do. This is, indeed, accepted as a self-evident proposition, whereas all that is self-evident is that they ought to cease from their sins, ought to practise the virtues more than they do, ought, in fact, to practise them completely. Yet how often do we hear preachers like the writer of *The Gospel and Human Needs* speak of men who do not think much about their sins as if they were indifferent to virtue, or as if their virtues, if they have them, were not Christian because they are not going through a sufficient number of unpleasant convulsions in their departure from

sin. This writer's assumption is that the only way of the Christian is to bestow much attention on one's personal guilt. The "new theologians" think exactly the opposite. They think that the best method of the Christian life is to think much, not about sin, but about virtue; and instead of meeting them fairly on that issue, this writer cries that they are not Christians because they do not think about sin. This sort of argument is the root of much bitterness, and it is worth while for each one of us to avoid it. Let us try to meet one another fairly and squarely on the ground of what is affirmed, and not on our assumption of what must lie under the ground, or what we think must grow out of it; and, of course, the ambiguities of the word "sin" are also something we ought to try to get to the bottom of, in order to avoid the flagrant injustice to our fellow-Christians which must be most displeasing to God and retard the very object we all have at heart.

LETTER XXVII

YES, I agree in the main with all you say about sin, but I think we ought all to make every effort to put an end to futile controversy. There are, no doubt, a few men who assert they have no sense of moral responsibility, and therefore no sense of sin. They can be left out of the controversy; to confuse them with men who admit such responsibility is only vexatious and futile.

Then, I think we do not realise that to-day the word "sin" is ambiguous; and that is why we are, many of us, so ready to depreciate people who talk about sin in any way to which we are not accustomed. We are constantly taking offence at what we assume to be said but is not said.

We all know the ambiguity in the case

of our English word "love." In our present stage of reflective thought it has at least two distinct meanings. There is the love of which Carlyle spoke when he said, "There is nothing inexorable but love"—the love which is a consuming fire, in which all the dross of the object must be burned away, which in its passion of tenderness is at the same time a passionate determination that its object shall eventually realise its ideal, and that its ideal shall eventually be realised in its object. On the other hand, there is love which manifests itself in blindness and indulgence toward the faults of its object, in false excuses, and in degrading gifts. Controversy is often confused and futile because of this ambiguity. The love that is inexorable takes a very different method from the legality that is inexorable of producing righteousness in its object; so legality is constantly charging the highest sort of love with laxity of purpose or inferiority of purpose, because it regards its methods as lax. On the

Ambiguity in the word "love."

other hand, we have natural affection constantly praising all love whose actions seem lax, under the impression that it will result in the highest good of its object. We have, indeed, between these two sorts of love a distinction as broad as that between the "Hound of Heaven" and the "Procuress to the lords of hell," a distinction more or less grasped now in most of our debate; and yet how often do we hear combatants, one of whom shouts that a religion all love must be a religion of laxity, and the other that a religion always athirst for righteousness belittles the power of love.

Ambiguity in the word "sin."

This illustrates the sort of confusion which exists about the word "sin." We all know that it came down to us from a stage in which the sense of moral responsibility did not enter into it at all. The primitive sense of sin is almost equivalent to our sense of fell disease contracted by infection. To-day, if we have been in an infected house we know that we are liable to

disaster. We do not try to estimate consequences by asking ourselves if we knew our danger beforehand, or whether it was right to incur it. The nemesis of malignant infection takes no account of motive or knowledge. To isolate ourselves for the sake of others, and make use of such antidote or sanitation as may prevent evil consequences to ourselves, is our one concern. How or why the law of health has been broken matters not. So, in this early conception of sin the law of God had been broken, it mattered not how or why. God's wrath was not considerate; it kindled like fire with friction. It took centuries of reflection to separate between inward responsibility and the outward act, and to attribute responsible justice to God. Then we have extraordinary involvements of these two ideas, into which comes the whole question as to whether ignorance is not in itself the root of sin, or whether it is an excuse for law breaking which abrogates the sin.

Out of all this complexity and many-

sided development of thought on the subject, we have to-day different meanings for which the one word is used. First, some think of sin as rebellion, a wilful breaking of definite law which excites divine wrath. (We get this idea repeatedly in our Church service—something done "*against* thy divine majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us.") Secondly, some think of sin as hereditary defect, coupled with responsibility for the aggravation or lessening of the defective condition; and they conceive of such condition as provoking in a just God only the energies of help and compassion. (This is also expressed, though more rarely, in our Prayer-Book, as, for example, "God, who knowest that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright, grant us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations.")

I am speaking here of the primary ideas raised by the word in different minds.

Those who regard sin as primarily rebellion, combine with this the belief that much wrong is due to mere defect, and that God is not always angry with imperfection; but their primary forensic idea colours all their thoughts on the subject. Minds of the other class may regard the defective condition as the weakness and stupidity of partial development, or as the result of positive moral disease; but at the same time they regard man's moral responsibility toward a defective condition as inadequately discharged.

In the first case we have the converted heart conceiving of God as a law-giver, unable to pardon without invoking mercy to balance wrath; in the other, conversion means the conception of God as a healer, bearing the sick child in His arms, aiding and strengthening every effort of nature toward moral health, incapable of any sentiment but compassion.

These two ways of looking at sin are temperamental. They have no doubt existed as long as there has been thought

on the subject of offences. The man who says, "I could have done good and did evil," and he who says, "I could not do good, and could not help doing evil," may be the sons of one mother, and reared on the same religious dogma; but if cast loose from their religious moorings, and if greatly in earnest, each will find a different religious expression. It is folly to assume that the man who feels the greater power to control his life has therefore the more profound sense of the wrong of wrong, of the purity of God, or is capable of the truer repentance. A man may feel the greatest loathing of the self that, in innate defect, is bound by cravings brutish or ambitious, of the will too weak to control these. He may experience the greatest shame at the thought of God whose nature is gloriously unified in righteous volition. His whole life may sum itself up in the greatest longing for a new life within. But if he has power of expression, he will not accuse himself of rebellion against God, or insist that because he must be repulsive to

the eye of Divine Holiness, he must also be guilty, responsible for his own foul condition. On the other hand, it seems equally foolish to cry that men who are convinced of their own wilful guilt attribute harshness and injustice to God because they preach His wrath. If we believe in divine government it seems safer to believe that both these deep-seated religious instincts have their place in the scheme of eternal life.

In the first case, we have the idea of man as capable of fixed volition. We have the vision of an inviolate law which was within the grasp of the race at some time, the transgression of which leaves the race always without excuse; the vision, too, of a law of conscience to which the individual can always conform, and for breaking which he is inexcusable. When this is connected with a sense that the inviolate holiness of God estranges him from the law-breaker and with a realisation that this estrangement is death, we get the acutest sense of guilt and remorse. When to this

is added the conviction that to the God of love the estrangement is more grievous than to man, we reach true penitence.

In the second case we have the emphasis laid upon the agonising thought that, in spite of racial defect bringing dimness into our moral vision and the wavering of palsy into our will, we still might have done more to throw off this evil condition in ourselves and to loosen its hold upon others. This amounts to the conviction that our present condition is due in part to chills and poisons deliberately sought and offered to others. When this is connected with a belief in the infinite particularity of God's love and the acute pain of His disappointment in us, the soul drinks from the deep well of endless penitence.

Now, as to sin's remedy: the man who lays emphasis upon his capacity of fixed volition realises more or less that by reason of the frailty of his nature he cannot always stand upright. He admits that infirmity and wickedness are bound up

together, but he seeks to define infirmity and to limit its scope. He acknowledges also greater and less authority among laws, and seeks to divide sins into some category equivalent to "deadly" and "venial." Again, the man whose conscience charges him with trifling with natural defect in the very seat of the will must, of course, acknowledge law and some capacity to conform to it. But he does not define the law, nor does he attempt to determine how far he is culpable, how far the shortcoming of the race of which he is but part is culpable. His sense of failure is deep; it does not seek definition of guilt. He is only concerned to co-operate with God in newness of life toward its future attainment.

The first, regarding God as fixing His attention on his guilt, seeks to assimilate the human to the divine by fixing his own attention on guilt. His conception of the way of salvation always has the ditch of man's guilt on the one side of it, as it has the safety-rope of God's love on the other.

The other thinks that God, suffering in our defect—suffering in the horrid contemplation of our disease — can only be pleased, only comforted, by the exercise of health-restoring energies; and he flies, as it were, from that contemplation of the defective self which might be called "the City of Destruction," to the sunlight of God's health-giving presence in front of him, the way of salvation leading ever further from the one, ever nearer to the other.

Here, again, we have legality constantly accusing men who regard sin primarily as defect of being without a sense of sin, crying out that if they do not point men to its constant contemplation they cannot point them to its cure. On the other hand, we have the sense of justice crying out that they who hold men guilty for a condition to which they were born would teach them to worship a Creator unjust and irresponsible. And all the time God is waiting for our angry passions to cease in order that He may bless us.

Between the religious lives lived under the power of these two conceptions there is, at their highest, little real difference; but on a lower level we are always hearing the challenge of foolish and angry voices —on the one part the cry that a religion that does not lay stress on the sense of guilt must be a religion all laxity; on the other the cry that guilt is but the fetish of the servile savage. The one cry is not any more profound or more true than the other.

Neither view solves the problem of the origin of evil. When we know so little of what our own life really is, so little of all that God may be, I do not see how we can fitly dogmatise as to what sin in its essence is. It is a pity to beat the air with recriminations, assuming that because others differ with us in the region of theory they differ with us in emotion and in purpose. As a matter of fact, all men who admit moral responsibility have some theory of sin; and all good men—especially all who, in whatever regiment, fight under the

banner of Jesus Christ—are very much at one in emotion and in practical purpose.

If we accept the traditional view of the Gospel we must accept Him as the divine sacrifice. If we believe that Jesus was divine we must acknowledge that His life revealed God as the All-Healer. I cannot see that the acceptance of either view involves shallow thinking, or laxity of moral purpose, or want of spiritual perception. It is quite true that most of us are shallow thinkers, lax in purpose and spiritually half blind; we prove it by being so ready to cast these taunts at our opponents. As long as we continue to fall foul of one another because we are ranged under different banners against the common enemy, we simply give the enemy an unnecessary and disastrous advantage.

LETTER XXVIII

BUT, after all, why do we waste half our force in adjusting our theories, deciding between this and that line of controversy? We are all agreed that what we need in the church, in the country, in the Empire, is a better life, and we religious people know there is but one way to betterness, and that way lies in God, and by God, and through God, and we Christians believe that the way to God is Christ. Neither you nor I doubt that there is need, immediate need, of a tremendous increase of goodness in every parish in the land; and goodness is godliness, and godliness, whatever else it be, is personal communion with the mind of God. We cannot flatter ourselves that this exists in any general and widespread way. Do men

who dwell in the secret place of the Most High go about invariably grumbling at the Government, assuming that it is always iniquitous in all things, if their own party does not happen to be in? Do they insist on always suspecting the good faith of foreign Governments when British interests are concerned? Do they refuse public duties because they will not brook the spirit of the age? Do they behave themselves generally as if their privileges and rights were the main things to look to in life?

Holy intolerance of sin needed,

It matters little whether we look upon sin as wilful guilt or as a defect of the will; we two agree that it is moral disease; it has to be stopped. The man who is guilty must shun temptations, must engross his life with all those interests and activities which are the very opposite of his special temptation. The man with a disease upon him must cease at once to live in bad conditions. He must get himself into sunlight and warmth; he must eat only nourishing

food; he must drink only what is pure. Otherwise he will go on contaminating the world.

Whatever view we take of sin, our shortcoming is undoubted. Have we shared our crust with the hungry, even to the point of being content with a moderate dividend on our industrial stock? Have we visited the imprisoned by giving up our personal comforts to persuade men that a just criminal code makes for edification of the criminal? Have we caused the lame to walk and the blind to see by giving up expensive sport and expensive beauty, that the poor may have healthy sport and access to nature and art? Have we so lived Christ to the needy, that the Gospel is incarnate before them—the only preaching that they can understand? Have we not kept ourselves undefiled at the cost of the defilement of brothers and sisters? Are we not inflated with the reforms that we fancy have been carried out in church and state, while the weak brother is stumbling all around us, and

the hungry brother is starving, and motherhood and childhood are dragged in the mire at our very doors?

I am no Puritan. It is colour and warmth, gaiety and passion, not greyness, that we need, not humdrum piety. If we all of us had more vitality in our very wickedness we should be far safer, far nearer God than we are. If the Pharisees, who did their utmost to stifle and crush the good news of heaven upon the lips of the very Son of God, had broken out of their own piety, had flung out suddenly in some bout of riot, they would have known themselves sinners even in the midst of their Pharisaism, and would therefore have been nearer, ten thousand times nearer, the Life and Light they sought to extinguish. Oh, it is life, with all its superabundant delight—the rosiness, the frisks and pranks of youth, the giant-like activity of heroes, the music and grace and free strenuous devotion of women—this, instead of childish competition and convention and fashion! Better a thousand

with more life and fuller.

times that human force should fling itself into wickedness than atrophy into legalism. We want better art, better acting, better play of all sorts; for only thus can we have better work and better religion.

Better—and this is the paradox we both admit—it is only through the door of a fuller religion that we can have any betterness. God is life, and the fuller life comes only from Him. But this impulse of fuller religion implies independence of hackneyed thought, getting into the mountains of the soul at night time, and meeting there with God, going out a great while before it is day into the solitudes of the spiritual life.

And you—what are you doing? Is not the greater part of your time spent in forcing, as it were, the nose of the laity to the grindstone of hackneyed words, hackneyed ideas, hackneyed respectabilities. If this ought to be done, ought you to leave the other undone? Is there no more excellent way than that those results which,

written in our lives, are so petty, so silly, so self-centred, so brittle that the first blow of a real doubt will shatter our habits of prayer ? That is, after all, the only question between us.

LETTER XXIX

I AM sorry that you are perturbed by dipping into *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, but you wanted to find a critical view of Christian history that took your sacerdotal view, so I sent it to you.

Christianity at the Cross Roads.

The contention that dismays you is that Jesus, in His eschatology, simply adopted the ideas of His age, that, like His contemporaries, He believed in a Messiah to appear in the material heavens to judge the world, destroy the old order, and bring in an absolutely new order—a new, universal nation, a new earth and new heavens. Candid minds must admit that the language of our Lord lent itself to this belief; and He seems to have been understood by many of His disciples to

Eschatology of Jesus.

announce Himself as the expected Messiah, shortly to return in material glory. And you are troubled, very troubled, because a man so religious and so sane as Tyrrell can say that this view, although it raises some difficulties, explains more. The chief difficulty it raises—that of our Lord having made a great mistake and taught as His principal doctrine what fact soon contradicted—seems to you an insurmountable difficulty. I agree that what we feel to be false we ought to refute by every fair argument at our command.

Sameness and difference in each generation.

When a new and disconcerting point in criticism comes up, I always try first to comfort myself by falling back on some fundamental view applicable at all epochs of history. One such consideration here is the knowledge that in every age there have been men who could not, and did not, adopt the ideas of their age. The men of one generation are very much the same as those of another—the same in their resemblances, the same in their differences.

As evidence of this, take first the Old Testament stories from Genesis to Job; in them we get the types of present-day human character sketched with sure hand—the religious man, the fighting man, the intriguing man; and women also, with their ways, heroic and trivial. Then go to the Greek tragedies; there again you find the mystic, the priest, the fighter, the intriguer, the heroine, and women who are not heroic. Hop and skip through the centuries as you will; tarry anywhere where there is evidence of real observation —take Shakespeare's plays, or the latest American novel—and you find religion and love, war and intrigue, setting forth exactly the same sort of men and women. There are really only two things in which men seem greatly to alter — the one is the amount they possess of such knowledge as can accumulate and such inferences as can be drawn from it; the other is in the power of compassion, or rather, perhaps, in the range of compassion. Certainly in intellectual power, in skill, in emotion and

in the religious faculty, mankind has been in all ages substantially the same. And differences have also been the same; for example, the religious language of any age has always stood for very different conceptions in different minds. The poet and the gossiper of the market-place, the prophet and the hard-fisted trader, the mystic and the mere formalist, at any given time and place must of necessity use very much the same language, but if we think for a moment, we know how vast are the differences of mental outlook behind their common form of expression.

An angel's trumpet.

A good many years ago a man who was a worker in the Salvation Army came to me chuckling with amusement and drawing my attention to a letter which appeared in a well-known journal. The writer had come across some preacher who, in describing the end of the world, had said that an angel would appear in the sky blowing upon a golden trumpet; he had afterwards approached the preacher with the hope of discovering

that his views were not so material as they appeared. He said to him, "You don't think that the trumpet will be made of actual gold?" A look of meditation came over the preacher's countenance, and after thought he replied, "It could not be of base metal, but I cannot be positive that it may not be silver." The details of this story I may not remember quite correctly, but my point is this—the gross materialism of the preacher's view stood out in strong contrast to the view of my friend of the Salvation Army, an uneducated man, who was giving his life to teach the same evangelical creed as the preacher, but was bubbling all over into smiles and laughter to think that any man could be so silly as to take figurative language literally! I do not think either of these men was an exceptional person. Natural power of insight differs, and has always differed. Two men are working in a field; to one all that is essential in past, present, and future is visible and tangible, and to the other it is invisible and inexpres-

sible; but they will both perforce use the same religious language. Two women will be grinding at a mill; and for one the mental horizon is small and the sky low and all things trivial, and to the other, however ignorant she be, however limited her outward life, there is always the music of the spheres and the unfathomable depth of the heart, with its power to endure and its yearning to enjoy.

Minds mystic and material must use a common language.

If this difference exist—and it certainly does and always has done—among the common run of folk, it shows most clearly among religious teachers. Some prophets may think with the bald and transient conceptions of their neighbours; but a great prophet stands alone, and the passionate tenor of his teaching is generally against the material views of his neighbours: yet he is bound to use their language—he has no other.

In all ages there have been mystics—souls whose whole interest was centred in intuitive perception of the unseen, and in

drawing the glory of a super-normal life into this life by faith and moral reformation; and there have also always been reformers whose chief idea of newness was something imposed from the outside.

All this must certainly bear on the question scholars are now discussing — whether our Lord thought of the glory in which He was immediately to appear as outward and visible or inward and spiritual, and it suggests that He may not have been compelled to think the prevailing idea of His age while He used its phrases. The history of all other mystics tends to show that Jesus must always have been conscious of a world of glory and triumph close around the earthly life, and always just glimmering through. To this His disciples were blind. He spoke of it to them and they could not understand; but He seems to have believed that after achieving death He would become its revealer in the hearts of His votaries. Spiritual intuition, a possession of every philosophic genius, seems

Thus a prophet's meaning must be inadequately expressed.

to have come to extraordinary fruition in the life of our Lord. He saw, no doubt, that humanity at its highest had dim intuitions of divine truth and love, while He felt Himself to have direct access to the Divine Mind. To possess this access must have constituted His highest glory, the glory He had with the Father. His Messianic consciousness seems to have implied at least the knowledge that after death He would be able perpetually to translate the mind of God into the common consciousness of all who sought His mediation. It followed that such a change would make heaven and earth immediately new and glorious to His disciples, and the gradual outward victory of wisdom over folly, of goodness over wickedness, of faith over the tyranny of physical cause and effect—this triple victory would be radical and secure. This at least He seems to have taught and believed. What more He may have meant by His words about the last things we must leave to His own Spirit to teach those who delve into the past.

But one thing is sure, our Lord laid great stress upon the marvellous power of God to destroy and recreate — to destroy evil conditions, to recreate good conditions in their place ; and insisted that the exercise of this power will always come upon us when we least expect it. We cannot serve Him faithfully without the constant expectation that He will come to us in power, enthroned upon the lowering clouds of change.

LETTER XXX

No; I do not for an instant think that we can settle the question of our Lord's eschatological outlook. We must hold our judgment in suspense. The "natural man" dislikes very much to suspend personal judgment on any subject of vital interest, but it is a most salutary form of self-control—the highest exercise of faith! A true fast, surely more acceptable to God than eating fish on certain days!

A true fast.

But it seems very obvious that our Lord's conception of love as the chief attribute of the Eternal does not fit in with the wholesale destruction involved in the immediate hope of the apocalyptic vision. This point of view had been already transcended by men of

Love and vengeance incompatible.

visionary and thoughtful temper. Think for a moment of the writer of the Book of Jonah. He was able to ridicule and grieve over the Jewish conception of his day as to the desirability of destroying the wickedest place in the world. Nor was he the only one before the time of Christ whose writings show trace of a brooding tenderness for man and child and beast, in which the Almighty was felt to participate.

The finest appreciation of this writer that I have met with appeared in an early number of *The Interpreter*. It is by Peake of Manchester.

In comment on God's final appeal to Jonah, Peake says :—

Author of Book of Jonah.

Jonah was one of those in whom humanity has been almost killed out by religion. But Yahweh's word, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd," hints that Jonah was not wholly an egoist. The untimely fate of the gourd had moved some pity for it in his breast. And from this God starts in His effort to lift the prophet into sympathy with His higher point of view. The gourd had

been but a transient interest in the prophet's life. For one brief day it had given him its shelter. Yet even this had been enough to kindle some feeling of affection in his heart. What, then, must be Yahweh's feeling for Nineveh? . . . Its teeming multitudes were not for God, as they were for Jonah, one indistinguishable mass. Each individual soul was as vivid and real to Him as the gourd was to Jonah. . . . And if it might be urged that the Ninevites had sinned beyond forgiveness, yet the judgment Jonah longed for was utterly indiscriminate. In that city there were more than sixscore thousand children who had not come to years of moral discernment, and were therefore innocent of the crimes of Nineveh against humanity. "And also much cattle," the author adds in one of the most striking phrases of the book. It was possible even for Paul to ask, "Is it for the oxen that God careth?" But this writer knows of a pity of God from which not even the cattle of the Ninevites were excluded.

There is a real historic difficulty in believing that any one of the Christian era who possessed extraordinary powers of sympathy and contemplation could hold that the heart of God and man could be satisfied with gathering only a few out of

the nations, and consigning all the rest, with helpless child and bird and beast and flower, to a terrible destruction. Man has indeed gained since the beginning of our era in width and depth of compassion; but even then, and at all times, great hearts have been compassionate, and, being so, were bound to attribute to Heaven their own desire for a larger salvation and the power to bring it about.

We get a gleam of insight into our Lord's thought on three points which all bear on this problem—there is His doctrine of the gathering in of the heathen, His doctrine that He could not foretell the time of restoration, and His doctrine of the gradual growth of the kingdom. The sayings that teach these things are more especially likely to be genuine, as the critics admit, because they suggest ideas specially foreign to the minds of His first interpreters, who thought of salvation as a catastrophe, who thought of Him as omniscient, and who were unprepared for the gathering in of the heathen.

Was our Lord inconsistent?

Surely these doctrines are, all of them, quite inconsistent with the swift ending of the world that in other places He certainly seems to announce. Professor Charles,[1] in his especially clear and succinct chapter on this subject, accepts this inconsistency on His part as historic. In the face of facts as they are at present known I do not pretend to see how to avoid accepting it; but it implies the attribution of such inconsistent notions to our Lord that we are pushed to hope that further knowledge of apocalyptic thought may give a more profound and spiritual meaning to the prophecies of the Parousia.

And as our Lord's philosophy of love, and the tenderness of love that He attributes to the Eternal mind, are not consonant with the apocalyptic ideas of His contemporaries, so I think His command to love our enemies would not tend to reconcile His followers to the destruction of their impenitent neighbours. Fierce persecutions, no doubt, generated many

[1] *Eschatology, Hebrew, Jewish, and Christian*, chap. ix.

fierce souls, who rejoiced in the thought, as, in some moods, Tertullian seems to have done; but that sentiment is not the legitimate fruit of the practice of the presence of the risen Christ, the practice of the forgiveness and love of even cruel enemies. The exercise of love and forgiveness generates a temper of sympathy, of excuses and pity, toward the forgiven enemy; the sight of his destruction would be painful, a thing to be feared, not desired.

Again, our Lord's poetic use of figures, gathered not only from Jewish life but from Jewish literature, the free way in which He used old terms with new meanings, give us great reason to hope that His oft-foretold return in the clouds with power and great glory meant something greater than His first followers could understand, something greater even than we can now understand.

No doubt He tried to teach them what He thought; and we have no proof that they all mistook Him. The most extra-

ordinary feature in our church history is our lack of information about most of His first disciples. But we are forced to perceive that the expectation of His quick and glorious return could alone — humanly speaking — have nerved St. Paul to plan for the conquest of the world. I was very much struck with the providence of this mistake on hearing Way's translation of "St. Paul" read—well read—from beginning to end. It took us all one summer day, from the early freshness into the dewy moonrise, in a garden looking eastward. I recommend the experience.

Providence of St. Paul's mistake!

LETTER XXXI

YES, I am sure we are ready to accept any doctrine of the human limitations of Jesus that does not render impossible, on the human plane, what, as a matter of history, He was and did; but it is difficult to see how, with any understanding of humanity, we can believe that a leader of imitative and inconsistent thought could draw the whole world after Him.

The founder of a world-religion probably a consistent thinker,

You know it is not long since the critical historian was honestly trying to do away with the personal influence of our Lord altogether. Christianity was conceived of as the outcome of certain movements of thought which at this time gathered together and swept over the civilised world. It was right to try this hypothesis: it did

not ring true. Of late the tendency of criticism has been to throw emphasis upon the necessity of a founder for every new way of life and a leader for every great movement of thought. The founder of Christianity, it is willingly admitted, brought about the greatest changes in the world of which we have any detailed history. It would seem reasonable, then, to assume that He who has done so great a work in the world was endowed with great power of thought. We do not suppose that because Moses has only left us a few fragments of a legal code he was not therefore a great thinker. We attribute profound thought to Buddha, although he has left no verbal fragment behind. Zarathushtra figures in every late scheme of comparative religions as a thinker. It seems a sort of madness to assume that the founder of Christianity excelled other men in visions of the unseen and in tenderness of heart, but not in the most distinctive of human attributes—the power to think.

Thought always seeks to be self-con-

sistent; it tries to unify; it must have its own scheme of things. It is but reasonable to assume that our Lord had His own deep philosophy, of which His life and the simple teaching He gave were the outcome. Had His interpretation of the universe, His interpretation of all that He knew of past history, of all that He saw in the present and all He expected in the future, been just what He could explain to His contemporaries and what they could receive, there would be a very real historic difficulty in accounting for the dynamic power of His life and teaching.

I think, perhaps, one reason why we do not realise the originality of His ethics is that we have not yet accepted it even in theory. In these days of much discussion about social possibilities, we do well to dwell on certain evidences of the moral genius of Jesus which are not emphasised because society is not in the habit of conforming, or thinking it possible to conform, to the rules He laid down for the church He founded.

and original.

How often do we hear it asked, in all earnestness, if manliness and courage would not degenerate if we could put an end to war! Or we hear it roundly asserted by the best of us that unless the amassing of wealth is encouraged our race would become idle. Or again, we hear that if men become very religious and cease to be what we call "worldly," the comfort, cheer, and pleasure of this life will fail. And by our ordinary *a priori* way of reasoning these assertions all seem true.

Indication of our Lord's mental force,

But Jesus excited courage without stimulating the spirit of war, so that those "of the Way" in the early centuries caused the whole heathen world to marvel at their courage while as yet Christianity was not desecrated by the use of the sword.[1] Jesus stimulated

[1] "Euelpistus the slave went to his death as bravely as the philosopher Justin, and Felicitas the slave-woman stood hand in hand with the matron Perpetua before the slaughter. St. John himself never threw down a bolder defiance to the majesty of the world and Rome than the insignificant slave-girl Blandina on the last of her long days of suffering for Christ, when she was brought into the arena naked before the furious crowd, covered with

toil, industry, enterprise, while condemning the hoarding of wealth and selfish enjoyment.[1] Jesus taught men to centre their hopes and energies in the unseen world, while also teaching them to enjoy this more richly.[2] To have done this seems,

burns and scars from former torments, yet still with a smiling welcome for the crowning horrors that were facing her. Even the hardened populace of the amphitheatre could not refuse her the admiring epitaph,—never woman suffered such things as this one" (*Early Church History*, by Dr. Gwatkin, vol. i. p. 233).

[1] "If any will not work, neither let him eat." "Upon the first day of the week let each of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (St. Paul).

"Idleness was a disgrace; uprightness and modesty, courtesy in social intercourse, the cheerfulness of a single heart, charity, and especially hospitality, were all strongly inculcated" (*Early History of the Church*, by Abbe Duchesne, p. 35).

[2] Ascetism is the reaction of the natural man from the grosser sins that shock him. . . . It was an element in the wisdom of Egypt and in the Stoic αὐτάρκεια; it balanced after a fashion the worst excesses of Syrian immorality, and it was very generally revered as the highest life, the true philosophy, and the best means of drawing near to the gods. Thus the early Christians found it in the air around them; and their long resistance to it is one more proof of its essential heathenism. It had to be dealt with from the first. Our Lord Himself "cleansed all meats"; and St. Paul tells the Romans that vegetarianism is a

merely on the intellectual side, a stupendous feat. The contemplation of it creates the strong presumption that Jesus had a profound philosophy of the moral life, a fruit of thought that would seem to prove that, in the intellectual sphere, it was not for nothing that He remained silent until middle life.

Again, there is an element in all that remains to us of the spoken words of our

matter of personal taste, and on no account to be made a question of right and wrong. So he reminds the Colossians that though ascetic timidity—"handle not, nor even taste or touch"—has a repute of wisdom, it is wisdom of a very undesirable sort, and of no value at all, but tends only to glut the carnal nature. A few years later he tells Timothy to give up drinking water, and plainly says that hindrance of marriage and commands to abstain from meats are doctrines of demons and deceiving spirits, the work of lying teachers and shameless hypocrites. The danger was real, and would have made its way quicker if his warnings had been less urgent. Upon the whole, Christian life was for a long time too strong for asceticism. It leaned more to Puritan fear of sin, refusing rather certain pleasures as dangerous than pleasure generally as pure temptation. Indeed, the picture drawn in Clement's *Teacher* is in this respect very like the best English life among serious men of all parties in the seventeenth century" (*Early Church History*, by Dr. Gwatkin, p. 240).

Lord which displays a quality of artistic power far too often overlooked, namely, those words always conform to the first law of the poet's work —that every figure used shall be beautiful, and be used to express something greater than itself. This cannot be said, for example, of St. Paul's words. The figure of a human body ever expanding and with ever multiplying members, is not beautiful; it for ever lacks the element of conviction that beauty gives to figurative language. We have no record of any such failure in the beauty of our Lord's speech. There is illimitable depth about the meaning of His simplest figures which satisfies the love of beauty, as it satisfies the human longing for justice and mercy in God and for right ideals in man.

and artistic power.

Here, then, are indications of two diverse faculties of mind in our Lord; and to them we must add the power of thinking out what may be called a new God and a new man—a God with a more marked affection

His power of constructive thought.

for humanity than had before been conceived of, and a humanity with a more direct and childlike dependence on the Divine affection. This involves a new philosophy, a conception of personality and of love as attributes of the Eternal in a sense in which nothing else is an attribute. Can we rank the author of such a conception as intellectually below the authors of other philosophies, and insist that He originated nothing?

To these three evidences of mental power we must add the fact that we have no shadow of proof that extreme ignorance of all that was not Jewish was a necessary condition of the Galilean peasantry of that day. Pilgrims of the diaspora went up yearly to Jerusalem by the same road that Jesus must annually have traversed, and many of them must have had knowledge of the world and of the great philosophic schools. To a young Jew, winsome and intelligent, there must always have been some ready to impart the great formative idealism of Hellenistic thought, which

would have early enfranchised his spirit from the slavery of the outward and visible, a slavery with which the apocalyptic notions of the transcendent were consonant.

Christianity at the Cross Roads is a very difficult book to sum up. It is very brilliant, and full of much that we all ought to take to heart; but I should say that its fundamental lack lies in its failure to attribute human intellectual force to the "Personality incarnate in Jesus." This failure causes Tyrrell to set a disproportionate emphasis upon all that side of Christianity which does not appeal directly to reason. A theology that would make Christianity merely rational would, of course, show a corresponding lack, and perhaps a greater one. I am satisfied that the story of our Lord could not have been what it is had He not believed that intuition was the master faculty; but we may admit that without accepting the suggestion of a Being of indifferent mental power, driven blindly by the Spirit. Tyrrell's words suggest

The apparent lack of Father Tyrrell's book.

to me a Being the beauty of whose transient humanity was like the colour of a sunset cloud. The light from another sphere makes all the cloud's beauty; the cloud itself neither adds to nor detracts from the sum of light; it merely shows it forth for a moment. But surely the ideal man is a union of the created spirit with the creating spirit—a union which generates some new glory, else were creation futile!

But we speak of what we cannot know.

Let me beseech you to remember that this fragment of difficulty that dismays you to-day will dismay your flock—man, woman, and child, saving the fools, so to speak—to-morrow. That is just what I have been telling you so long. How are you going to help them to hold faith undisturbed in such case? By mastering the apocalyptic problem, deciding what is true, and telling them that? Alas! no. No one knows, or will know for many a day, what the consensus of historical judgment will finally be on this; and when they do, other difficulties will be in every one's mind. You

cannot here find or transmit any outward authority; without faith in some inward authority men must waver, their ranks must break in face of such disturbing interpretations. It is the inward authority alone, the voice of God in the soul, that can give peace and contentment in the dark places of necessary doubt concerning traditional beliefs.

LETTER XXXII

In Father Tyrrell's books there is a great deal which opens the mind to the difficulties and needs of the personal spiritual life. One very striking passage in *Through Scylla and Charybdis* runs :—

> Catholicism refuses to despise the half because it is not the whole, or to confound little with nothing. In the bare-walled conventicles of pure reason, if the soul cannot do her best she can do nothing. In a Catholic temple she can do her second best or her third. There are altars to visit, and candles to light, and beads to finger, and litanies to mutter, and the crucifix to gaze upon, and a hundred little occupations not less good because others are much better, or because abuses are easy and frequent.

The second or third best of the soul.

He evidently knows nothing of the possibilities of a second and third best in

a "bare-walled conventicle," but this passage throbs with a knowledge of humanity and a compassion of which we all feel the need. There is a great truth in this defence of the inferior possibilities of the soul. Recent arguments for retaining Catholic usages all harp more or less harmoniously on these strings. The harp is not worn out; there is true melody in the performance. We must freely recognise that prayer of a lower moral character, for lower moral ends, is prayer, just as truly as prayer in the highest aspiration of the soul is prayer.

Inferior prayer is true prayer.

The great, underlying truth seems to be that not only all public religion, but all private and personal religion, must contain the three strands of the seeking life which have in all lands come down from the earliest times. None of us can set aside the prayer of mystical communion, the prayer of reason, or the prayer of magic, without grave loss. Great numbers of individuals, and small societies of men, have time and

Prayer—mystical, rational, and magical.

again chosen to emphasise only one or another of these needs of the human heart in its communion with God. They have trusted the fragile bark of the soul to naked intuition as solitary oarsman; they have sought to thread the pathways of the unseen with stern reason for their only guide; or they have been content, without thought or feeling, to turn the prayer-wheel, to intone the incantation, or perform the rite.

Jesus a mystic.

On inward illumination as having authority over outward, Jesus set the seal of His great approval, making a show of proving the mystic's life openly, proclaiming life a sacrament, using all nature as a symbol of what man had coined no word to express, claiming as His only authority and source of power the inward Ghost of God. He demanded of all men that they should drink from this source of truth. Did He not thank God that, as babes unable to speak, men could take in revelation?

But He addressed reasoning to reason.

The wisdom of the past—the law and the prophets—is to be held sacred, but to be obeyed only so far as they do not transgress the higher authority of intuitive right. The comparison, the decision, is man's. And all His moral teaching appealed to reason: thus, man loves, forgives, gives — how much more shall God! We cannot pray well without taking our reason as far as it will go in our quest for God. Where the inward light and conscious reason differ, as they constantly will where both are virile, passionate effort to discover, to amend, "the rift within the lute" must be a large part of the strenuous life of prayer.

Jesus and reason.

As to magic, while every one is ready to quarrel over effort at any exact definition, most authorities seem prepared to admit that in its earliest form magic probably combined the primæval elements of both science and religion. The beginning of ideas of cause and effect between things, and the begin-

Magic a primitive instinct.

ning of ideas concerning spirit powers, both seem to join in certain stages of magical practice, and the ideas giving rise to these practices flow both into religious and scientific channels. I think the effort to establish an essential difference between all normal religious practices and magical practices has entirely failed; a very good example of such effort is found in the article on Magic in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.[1]

Where we find the beginning of magic, we find that the material effect may be produced by a thing influencing the object, or by a magician influencing the object directly, or by a magician invoking the power of some minor spirit to produce the same effect. Later, we have the magician invoking the power of whatever god he worships to produce the same effect, as in the story of Moses and the plagues. In this last stage we get the historic union of priest and magician, of petitional prayer for material effects and magical incanta-

[1] Art. on "Magic," by O. C. Whitehouse.

tions. By degrees still later we get a growing distinction between inimical and beneficent magic. In the Babylonian liturgies the higher deities are invoked to produce beneficent effects.

Magic in New Testament.

It is, surely, arbitrary to draw a line between magic and religion. Take, for example, the clash of swords between St. Paul and Elymas the sorcerer. The proconsul seems to have been convinced, not only that St. Paul was the greater magician of the two, but that there was divine power behind him. To separate such an instance either from magic or from religion we must unduly limit the meaning of one of these words. I think we must look at all the beneficent miracles recorded in the Gospels and Acts in the same way, and to these must be added the undoubted belief of early Christians expressed in the last verses of St. Mark. When the student of comparative religions tells us that these things come in the stream of magical beliefs, why contradict him? The con-

ception of religious magic as purely inimical or purely foolish seems to me to greatly weaken any theory of progressive revelation. The adoration of the Magi at the cradle of the Christ has force as a parable if not as history; the unconscious genius that works through popular tradition surely sets forth in this story a profound truth. But I am not wedded to one theory or another; all I wish to make clear is that, for want of a better word, I am calling petition for any effect to be visibly realised on earth the "magical element" in prayer. That is all I mean by the expression; I merely use it for want of a better. The robust passion to live and to enjoy life, to be blessed and to bless, which is found in all magic not inimical, seems to exist abundantly in all religions of Semitic stock, and I believe it to be a part of true religion.

What things were they that man, the universal man, in instinctive magic sought to obtain from God—health? the means of life? guidance? immunity from lurking

dangers? Jesus said, Put these things in the second place and you shall have them at the hand of God. To me it is unthinkable that the story of Jesus should be what it is if He had desired to quench the unquenchable desire of man to obtain direct from God all that makes for a fuller, more joyous life on earth, as well as what makes for a more rational hold of truth and higher spiritual perception. If the early church cherished such promises of His when the end of the world seemed near, how much more are they important to us!

Thus, I cannot but think that in prayer, while we need to use all our intuitive power and all our reasoning power, we also need to use our deep-seated instinct for magic. Our Lord took these three strands of human religion just as they naturally came to Him from the heart of the world, and, blessing each of them, passed on the undivided cord, the only safe, silken clue to the maze of earth and the courts of heaven.

Triple cord of prayer.

Of course it has been right and reasonable for scholars to seek to untwist the triple cord of the clue; they have bidden us take only what satisfies the mystic, or the philosopher, or both, into the rope-walk of the theologians, and bring out a one-stranded or a two-stranded cord, by whose leading, they have said, we can go more straight to God. Life is too strenuous, the maze too tortuous; the cord catches on rough corners; the new cord gives way; the path is lost. What then? Well, the triple cord is always there to be picked up again. The prodigal is always wiser for his adventure in this sense, that he does not omit what the elder brother omitted—to accept his father's bounty.

In this connection I hail all that research into the apocalyptic literature of the time of our Lord which is throwing emphasis on transcendental and miraculous elements of the Gospel. It seems to me that in every generation and every life we must give them equal importance with the rational.

But all I want to say, and at too great length have already said, is that what is necessary for religion at large, for every religious body, is also necessary for every man, and necessary in his most inward prayer. It is the quickening of this most inward prayer that alone can save us from degenerating into religious automata, or giving all our best fire to what is merely partisan piety. If you would preach prayer you must preach its three-fold strand.

LETTER XXXIII

YES, roughly speaking, by petitional prayer one must mean the prayer of intercession, and one assumes faith. The heart that nears God in prayer will rapidly get tired of itself *qua* self, and of its private concerns except as they are involved in the welfare of others. The prayer of dolorous petition, which I do not reckon a prayer of faith, may go on for a lifetime in hysterical egotism; but faith that reckons confidently that all her desires are granted cannot possibly remain alone or at home. She is so rich that by the very impulsion of riches she will first include the needy in her hospitality, saying, "Our Father, give *us*," and then she will be abroad, crying joyfully, "Give to him, and to her."

Faith always rich.

There will naturally always be the sense — at times the passionate sense — of personal gratitude or need regulated by forces beyond our ken; but, in bulk, petitional prayer must be thought of as the prayer of intercession. I am sure — more and more sure — that some definite material advantage, in addition to the spiritual good sought for those whom we particularly pray for, ought always to be part of this prayer, and for three reasons.

Intercession necessary to faith.

(1) It brings vividly before us the reality of the business we transact; and if we do not get what we ask on the material plane, we have the gravest reason to question whether we are praying in faith at all and getting spiritual blessing.

(2) When we ask for spiritual blessing on our neighbours, there is often a little grudge in our minds inclining us to feel that chastening material conditions would be desirable to promote reformation. Alas! unless we are anxious to share in,

nay, to take the lion's share of, this material tribulation, there can be little love in such a prayer, and it partakes of the nature of inimical magic.

(3) Then, every one of us must be in close touch with many particular ills which it is not possible for us to remove except by prayer, and which religious fatalism alone could be content to ascribe to the will of God. If these burdens of the poor and the sick are not on our hearts we are not living in the fellowship.

If the materialist or student of old cults call this "magic," or "white magic," or "beneficent magic," I have no quarrel with him. I am sure that it is of the essence of the Christian idea that men should be always invoking, expecting, and receiving the wonder-working power of the living God on behalf of the helpless and the needy, and on behalf of the world.

This prayer, offered on behalf of the corporate need, keeps us constantly waiting

for the redemption of God's poor from their grinding poverty and God's sick from their futile pains. It is only when we thus watch and wait that redemption can draw nigh.

LETTER XXXIV.

I QUITE agree with you. I do not think faith as a power of the mind can be defined; but it is at least certain that, many years after the death of Jesus, the four authors of our Gospels dared to represent Him as making the most astounding promises to the prayer of faith. Upon this representation they staked their all. After living for a generation the life He taught, men could still write these promises quite simply. Could they possibly have done so if their own experience — the experience of the persecuted church—gave them the lie as our experience does?

Evangelists' experience of prayer.

Our Lord always couples faith with its achievement, does He not? Supposing we took as a working hypothesis the assump-

tion that those whose prayers were never visibly realised were not Christians, where would that land us? And yet I am inclined to think this is on the whole a more reasonable way of going about to define faith than any other. Or, if we cannot define it, let us describe it as that element in prayer which gains its end. It is fair, at least, in deference to the story of the evangelists, to describe the man of Christian faith as having this characteristic—that he will ask certain boons from God which are to be realised in the outward and visible sphere, and will know quite definitely that he receives them. How many of us can abide by this classification? For it seems to me evident that the boon received must be something different from what would have been received in the natural course of events without the prayer.

LETTER XXXV

No ; I can't see that to believe firmly that God's dealings with us are the inevitable result of our dealings with Him, detracts from His personality, makes Him merely a force of law. If I, being your friend, go to you and say, "I am hungry," can you do otherwise than bring out at least bread and cheese ? If I say, "Look here, I want help in a difficult matter," would you dream of failing to give it your attention ? Could you possibly fail under any circumstances to give me your best help in any way that I needed it ? Does this detract from your personality ? Does it make you merely a force of law ? I might, of course, form a habit of babbling requests which represented no real desires, and which

Personality both law-abiding and transcendent.

you would naturally disregard; I might go mad, and not know what I wanted! But as long as I am sane, and speak to the purpose, my friends will surely in the future, as they always have in the past, do more for me than I ask, be more to me than I could possibly think of beforehand.

The reason we feel that personality is the most profound reality, the only real thing that we can know, the only thing that we can really know, is not that it does not obey law, but that it obeys absolutely the law which, being a law to itself, it also transcends. The air and the word with which you will bring out your bread and cheese to satisfy my hunger is quite different from that with which you will set meat before H——, and different again from the way in which you will entertain old T——. We are, in fact, different persons to every different friend we deal with. That is what makes human personality so baffling, so vexing, so satisfying, so worshipful. And I conceive that the

personality of God, which I think we only know at all through the personality of Jesus Christ, is not less absolutely lawful than we are, but more so, because of its infinite transcendence of law.

LETTER XXXVI

Is goodness a condition of effective faith?

Certainly, with one exception, every religious teacher I know has laid down the condition of the psalmist, "If I incline to sin in my heart Thou wilt not hear me." All religions have joined in this: whether the purity they taught was attained by sacrifices or ethical actions or by both, such cleanness as they conceived possible was the pre-requisite of intercessional prayer.

The goodness required is of very various sorts. Here is a very modern expression of the view by a Mr. Gordon— of Boston, U.S.A., I believe— whose devotional books seem to be sold by tens of thousands. He enlarges on the need of "entire consecration" as a condition of efficacious prayer. Self-seeking is to be

Lore of the oratory.

wholly excluded from motive before there can be any satisfactory result.

If I am holding something in my life that the Master does not like, if I am failing to obey what His voice has spoken, that to me is sin. It may be wrong in itself. It may *not* be wrong in itself. It may not be wrong for another. Sometimes it is not the thing involved but the One involved that makes the issue. If that faithful quiet inner voice has spoken and I know what the Master would prefer and I fail to keep in line, that to me is sin. Then prayer is useless; sheer waste of breath. Aye, worse, it is deceptive. For I am apt to say or think, "Well, I am not as good as you, or you, but then I am not so bad; *I pray.*" The truth is because I have broken with God the praying—saying words in that form—is utterly worthless.[1]

Publican and Pharisee.

In all this lore of the oratory, which sums itself up in the belief that we must have very virtuous intentions to pray aright, have we not come upon something much more like the prayer of the Pharisee than like that of the publican? We have no right, surely, to read into that parable more than that a feeling of

[1] *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, by S. D. Gordon, p. 70.

defilement is a better passport to the courts of God than a feeling of virtue—although I believe many Sunday School teachers explain that the publican was a completely reformed character! Moreover, we must make clear to ourselves that in those days contrition had never been labelled a virtue. Ever since it has been so labelled, the very consciousness of it often leads to the subtle Pharisaism which says, "These people who know not the constant goad of this feeling are cursed." Simply considered, this parable would seem to indicate that men ought always to pray, even when they feel themselves to be very bad indeed.

When the psalmist had piously said that if he inclined to do wickedly God would not hear him, he immediately adds in pious triumph, "but Thou didst hear me"; which is obviously a proof of his own virtue. Do we not perhaps here put our finger upon the very root of that enormous failure of religion to do for the individual and the race what it purports to do, the enormous failure of Christianity to do what the Christ

promised that it should do? When that best of human lives was lived, showing forth as no other life has done the force of God, with what did it struggle and contend in fierce, undying conflict from first to last? Was it not with just the spirit that makes human righteousness of one sort or another the passport to God's favour?

Nor does it seem to me at all to the point to argue that what our teaching exacts is merely a sense of one's own unworthiness and a pure intention. Contrition, humility, and the will to be obedient, are surely virtues; he who has them is better than he who has them not; therefore such teaching does insist upon some degree of goodness as a passport to God's favour.

The meed of prayer is to desire, not to desert.

I believe that for many years men persuaded themselves that the ideal father only heeded the request of the child who meant to be good; but this was before the days of the scientific temper which constantly refers theories to facts; and we now know well

that the obstreperous boy, radiant and unrepentant in the midst of his joyous mischief, cannot cry in vain to the father's heart, nor is he less likely to obtain indulgence. If there is a form of naughtiness which repels parental love, is it not that of constant whimpering and lack of self-confidence? The argument of Matt. v. is not that we, because we are imperfect, do not know what is good in natural relationship, but that because such knowledge is deeply natural to our imperfections we can argue from our feelings to those of God. When a child asks for food we do not question whether he be good or not, but ask only whether he is hungry. It is not desert but desire that Jesus urges as the right basis of prayer.

Of course this is counter to man's commonest way of thinking about a great invisible Power, because he does not naturally attribute fatherhood to his God. The primitive heathen believes that if you are offending a powerful person, or harbouring a disposition to offend him which he can

detect, he will not listen to your request; to get on the right side of the Deity you must conform to His likes and dislikes. Even your dog, when he has broken some law, slinks aside, convinced that at that time you will not feed him. But have you ever let him go without food? That, after all, is not the way of a good master or a good father: and the first word of Jesus was the assertion of the fatherhood of God.

I am sure that the idea that people need to be good before their intercessions can avail does much to turn men from the life of prayer and keep them from it; and the one religious teacher in whose words I cannot find this doctrine is our Lord Himself. What He requires is that we should ask for good things and believe that we shall get them.

When we do not get what we ask we say these cannot be good things, or else we are not good enough to obtain them. But the whole tenor of the Gospel story says to us, "How is it that ye have no faith?"

LETTER XXXVII

YOUR pages pant with indignation as I read them. Yes, I can well believe that what I said "sounded like Antinomianism"; but it isn't.

I do not believe that goodness of any sort is a condition of efficacious prayer, but I do believe that no man ever comes to God in real prayer without being renewed, even though it be unconsciously, and the habit of intercession must certainly bring about newness of life because of the community of motive and will—man's and God's. I believe that there would be a great deal more goodness—the highest sort of quiet, unconscious, childlike goodness—if men were encouraged simply to talk with God about all their desires without making im-

Goodness the result, not the cause, of efficacy in prayer.

portant preliminary arrangements and constantly turning to ratify them. This appears to me in harmony with the extreme simplicity of our Lord's teaching about prayer; but most people try to improve upon it, apparently thinking it as it stands either mad or effeminate.

But as to personal goodness, I emphatically agree that it must be the *result* of all true prayer. Unless it be an ever-growing result the soul must remain in the most elementary stage of petition. But to grow is to feel the mystic's need of personal purity. This need is expressed by Inge in summing up the testimony of the mystics.

> These explorers of the high places of the spiritual life have only one thing in common—they have observed the conditions laid down once for all for the mystic in the 24th Psalm, "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." The "land which is

The path up the holy mountain.

very far off" is always visible to those who have climbed the holy mountain. It may be scaled by the path of prayer and mortification, or by the path of devout study of God's handiwork in Nature; and, lastly, by the path of the consecrated life in the great world, which, as it is the most exposed to temptations, is perhaps on that account the most blessed of the three.[1]

I cannot, however, help thinking that goodness in those who attain to it is far more a wedding garment given by the Master of the Feast than something woven of moral toil. To be a mystic a man must be good, but I fancy he contracts goodness by contact, takes the infection of God's beauty, the contagion of His health.

The wedding garment.

Christian Mysticism, p. 312.

LETTER XXXVIII

WHEN quite young I once collected as many of the writings of the mystics as I could get, and read and read—I confess not with much pleasure or to much edification. I did not understand them, of course, taking each as an isolated thinker; but I remember feeling that the notable mystics were perhaps more different from the common devout man in the gift of a fantastical imagination and in love of expression than in having clearer perceptions of things unseen. Before I comforted myself with this audacious criticism, I remember being worried by the effort to see my soul like an alp, its peak lost in heaven. The "Spark" at the apex of the soul, one with the uncreated God, vexed me by the picture it raised. Any learner

now is helped by the history of progressive mystical ideas to relegate such curious images to their historic place, and gets also some hint as to their meaning. But I rejected them as husks; they were not a means of grace.

I mention this only because I think many religious people stop just there with their ideas of mysticism. They confound the great vital fact of the soul's power of spiritual perception with certain efforts to express those perceptions in terms half metaphysical, half imaginative. They hesitate to exercise this great power inherent in the soul, under the impression that if they did so they would take up with wild ideas. I saw this impression the other day embodied in a medical book about mental diseases, where the author—Schofield—maintained authoritatively that while religion of a plain moral sort was not detrimental to health, "mysticism" was, of course, detrimental.

Mysticism and sanity.

There is plenty of proof that even the mystics, who gave expression to their

experience of the unseen, were not only sane, but in ordinary affairs particularly sane.[1] But the point I am at just now is

[1] "However profound and complicated Eckhart's metaphysics may appear, his practical religion is as simple and straightforward as that of the popular saints. . . . Eckhart was a highly practical man, who did his day's work with fidelity and with telling effect. He eminently preserved his *balance*, and he kept his spiritual perspective healthy" (*Studies in Mystical Religion*, by Rufus M. Jones, p. 236).

"In commenting upon the story of Martha and Mary, those favourite types of activity and contemplation, Eckhart surprises us by putting Martha first. Mary hath *chosen* the good part, that is," he says, "she is striving to be as holy as her sister. Mary is still at school: Martha has learnt her lesson. It is better to feed the hungry than to see even such visions as St. Paul saw" (*Christian Mysticism*, by W. R. Inge, p. 161).

Plotinus taught that the highest stage of truth is ecstasy—an experience which, Porphyry tells us, was four times granted to him. Yet here is the picture of him which Porphyry gives us, "Many of the noblest men and women, when death drew near, brought to him their boys and girls, and property, and entrusted all to him as to a holy and divine guardian. His house was full of boys and maidens, among whom was Polemo, for whose education he was so careful that *he would listen to his schoolboy verses*. He endured even to go through the accounts of his wards' possessions, and was most accurate and business-like, saying that, until they became philosophers, their property and revenues ought to be kept intact and secure" (Quoted in *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 71).

"Jean de Gerson held the foremost scholastic position

that, although proof that many men have had experience of the unseen must be found in the writings of the few who gave to such experience literary expression, such expression cannot fully represent the value of their experiences, nor can it to any degree represent what must have been learned by

in Europe, Chancellor of the University of Paris, and he was the controlling power in the great Council of Constance. It was the deepest purpose of his life to build up again the invisible Church within the visible, but he was a politician, a reconciler. In a powerful sermon in 1405 he told the King of France the pitiable condition of his people, and called him to his duty to relieve their sufferings and to give them their rights as men. A still greater service he rendered to the people by teaching in person the children of the poor, and to train their innocent spirits he wrote an *A B C for Little People*, telling them about the Divine Father and His holy will. Higher than his title of "Most Christian Doctor" was the other title he gained, "Doctor of the people and Doctor of little children" (*ibid.* p. 306).

"The thing that most impressed Gerard Groote at the time of his visit to Ruysbroek was the *practical* side of his life" (*ibid.* p. 314).

"St. Teresa's life included a period of extreme practical activity, when she devoted herself to organising communities of bare-footed Carmelites. In this work she showed not only energy, but worldly wisdom and tact in no common degree. Her visions had certainly not impaired her powers as an organiser and ruler of men and women." (*Christian Mysticism*, p. 222).

the multitude of men who have lived by the power of such experiences and have not sought to express the inexpressible. I am inclined to think the greater mystics, and by far the greater multitude of mystics, have been, and always will be, greatly silent. The outcome of mysticism ought rather to be in action and in the progressive enlightenment of the reason.

Long after I had vexed my soul over the "Spark" of Eckhart as a divine part or faculty of the human soul, I came upon the adoption of this term—the divine "Spark"—to indicate what the mystical or hearkening element in prayer was to the rest of the religious life, personal and corporate. Strongly put, the idea was that the soul exercising her power of perceiving God, was the altar where God became Himself the vital fire without which all religion and all morality were merely formal. The historic phrase was thus powerfully used as a synonym for the mystic element in prayer. I thought I got this passage out of Dr. Gwatkin's Gifford Lectures, but

now I find it must have come from another source. The author of it gave to mysticism true value.

There is at least one thing to be said for this sort of prayer which ought to have weight with those who believe that God is and is the rewarder of them that seek Him. History shows it to be certainly a means used for seeking God, so that if it is honestly and humbly tried it cannot altogether fail, still less can it bring delusion and disaster on the seeking soul. For materialists, especially those whom Professor James aptly calls "medical materialists," to believe that religion is unwholesome is natural, but for the godly it is foolish to suppose that the use of any possible channel of grace is a source of psychic miasma. As to abuses, alas! what is there that we do not abuse? The man who, afraid of abusing it, wrapped in a napkin the little power confided to him did not gain much praise. Our Lord was always quite clear that it is by not doing things that men attain to perdition.

Talent in a napkin.

LETTER XXXIX

I CANNOT see that petitional prayer is divided by any sharp edge from the prayer of the mystic, or, as we may call it, the prayer of inward silence, although many people interpret many mystics, perhaps not without some justification, as despising petitional prayer. Meister Eckhart makes one nice remark which lends itself to this misconstruction—

The prayer of petition blends into the prayer of inward silence.

Some people are for seeing God with their eyes, as they can see a cow (which thou lovest for the milk, and for the cheese, and for thine own profits). Thus do all those who love God for the sake of outward riches, or of inward comfort; they do not love aright, but seek only themselves and their own advantage.[1]

[1] Quoted by R. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 237.

As a matter of fact, it is impossible to have the prayer of fellowship without its active side, desire—desire for spiritual or temporal good—for the self or the world. Communion between the soul and God must result in spiritual power, and that must translate itself into practical efficiency in some direction. If there is no fruit of efficiency it is safe to say there is no real communion. As Eckhart says, "What a man takes in by contemplation he must pour out in love"; and it might as truly be put, "must pour out in efficiency in any vocation."

There is certainly no possibility of distinguishing between the spiritual and the material in life as we know it. It would be easier far to fix the dividing-line between the animal and vegetable kingdoms. And I do not think it is at all possible to separate mystics from ordinary people. The lamp of mysticism is more or less alight in every religious soul, and therefore in every true prayer, although often unrecognised.

The mystical element in prayer is perhaps constituted by the loss of sense of self in communion, and may perhaps be defined as participation in God's side of man's communion with Him. Consciously and with effort, or unconsciously and involuntarily, man's soul often seems to go over the line of its own urgency toward God and become absorbed in God's urgency manward. Of course, when we come to analyse it, this is a common experience of all affection, all friendship; an identification with the other self is involved. The joy of self-bestowal in any form is the joy of participation in the reception by the other of what we bestow. I remember an old professor who, whenever he got a new idea or a new fact, was all impatience until he could potter over into another house where another old professor lived; and the burden of his talk until he got there always was, "X will be so impatient to hear this." "X will be interested in this." "This will be a new light to X." I once crossed the ocean with a singularly beauti-

ful and high-minded girl who was going to marry a poor and long-patient lover awaiting her on the other shore. When she had courage to confide her secret and sometimes speak of her anticipations, the expression of her affection always took the same form—"Dear fellow! how glad he will be to see me." "Poor dear! I know he's just counting the moments." She felt every delay in the progress of the voyage through the high tension of his expectancy. By these very simple steps we can perhaps rise to some understanding of the inexplicable thing that happens in the mystical moments of prayer.

All mystics seem to join in conceiving of the first step of such prayer as the contemplation of the Divine nature. Using the word "contemplation," I think we should beware of identifying it with what Rufus Jones graphically calls "the backstairs" method of arriving at "a state of joyous absorption" in the Divine. Self-hypnotism for the sake of further powers of auto-suggestion with a

True contemplation not hypnotic.

moral or hygienic end in view may or may not be desirable; it is only by ignorance that it could be successfully used as a means of reaching union with God, for the moment its nature were recognised it would defeat its own ends. The path of contemplation is not necessarily of this nature, except as selection of anything for the time being negates other things. The artist who paints, the poet who sings, is for the time being absorbed only in that which he has chosen to celebrate. The difference between this condition and that reached by deliberate negations is the difference between Puritanism proper and a Puritanical life lived for the sake of some further end. The Puritan sets aside certain pleasures as of themselves wicked; but every strenuous man must set aside certain pleasures to make room for something more desirable. The ascetic endures hardness for the sake of the virtue of hardness; the man who is amassing a fortune endures hardness without seeing any virtue in it. The man of strong purpose has a saner

attitude toward the distractions which fall away naturally from his attention than has the man who seeks to establish purpose by despising distractions. It seems to me just the same way with contemplation in prayer. For men to attribute to God what they love to think of, and to lose themselves in thinking of Him as lovely, is a saner and more wholesome way of attaining some glimpse of the joy of God than by seeking escape from all thought and all desire.

I have just been reading Rufus Jones' *Studies in Mystical Religion* with some satisfaction. He is perhaps a trifle impatient of other elements in religion, but he takes one meandering in the age-long lore of visionaries and saints, and acts as a most sympathetic guide. He defines mysticism as "the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and immediate consciousness of the Divine presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense, and living stage."

Dr. Rufus M. Jones.

LETTER XL

I THINK by "the prayer of inward silence" I mean the contemplative prayer that includes listening and hearing. What is it to listen intently? It is to sum up all one's faculties in concentrated attention upon silence. When we thus listen what we hear sinks deep. The babel of the upper voices within us, the chattering dialectic that goes on in our minds about everything when we do not fix our attention — these are silenced when we are intent upon listening. The babbling waves of the mind may close again swiftly over what we hear, but it is that which stirs the depths which will ultimately change the current upon the surface. St. Theresa, most practical of women, advises her nuns that they must

The prayer of inward silence.

not be discouraged by distracting thoughts in their prayers, for no one can avoid these. She bids them, when their attention returns, simply take up their prayer where they left it off, believing that God will hear it as consecutive. We need far more of this sort of encouragement. It is particularly necessary with regard to the listening attitude, which few of us can maintain long. We are apt to suppose that when, after a few moments of listening, we hear, and some one faint word of the heavenly harmony for the tenth part of an instant stirs our soul, it will do us no good at all, is not really worth the catching, because our mind so swiftly begins again its trivial chattering; whereas what we have but hardly received is like the tiniest drop of some strong chemical, changing the properties of the whole mixture into which it goes.

I think you are quite right in saying that the silences in the Eucharistic service give it great power and attraction, even to those who are not conscious of this attraction. It always seems to me im-

portant that the service should not be hurried. In general, the usage of our liturgy gives little time and opportunity for the waiting and expecting attitude of soul which ought to accompany all petition.

LETTER XLI

I DARE say you are right—that the prayer of reason ought to come last into the court of God. Ah, me! I am sure of this—we leave reason out for the most part just because we leave out the highest exercise of faith, the prayer of silence and hearkening. The prayer of reason.

How little, how very little, do we bring our life, its prejudices, its hatreds, its motives, and reason them out calmly with the Jesus of the Gospels alone in the presence of God! The impulse to do so is lacking because we have no vivid sense of the presence of God in the soul.

I was once in a colonial town where the people lived in houses made of wood. The walls of a superior wooden house, it seems,

are built of beams which are covered on the outside with a casing of boards and on the inside with a wooden lining. Between these is an air-chamber; and so also with the floors. But most of the houses in this settlement were quite inferior, mere log-houses. One carpenter, however, had built himself a very fine dwelling. The beams had been chosen of the finest and strongest timber. Outside, the clapboard casing was of the very best, and inside walls, floors and ceilings were of the finest wood, exquisitely dovetailed and fitted together, planed and polished, not a crack or crevice to be seen, not a knot in the fine graining. After some years, what seemed a sort of miracle of evil happened: while the rougher houses stood secure, this particular house began to sag and crack, and it was discovered that the woodwork had been so well fitted together that no air could percolate to the beams; consequently, dry rot was making havoc with all that was essential to the structure.

This seems to me a good illustration of what prejudice does for us. A man's life stands or falls by the truth that is in it; but when he gets his whole view of truth dove-tailed and planed into all that seems to him desirable to think, when he confuses with truth a set of opinions which make his creed easily fit in with everything else he can think of in heaven and earth, we may be quite sure that there is something wrong, because, in the very nature of things, the finite conception of truth cannot fit perfectly, either with the physical universe, which for us is practically infinite, or with the truth of God. And what is excessive in this nicety of outward fitting I am going to call prejudice. As with intellectual truth so with practical principle: a man's life stands or falls by the principle that he holds to; but when principle becomes a system of morals and action so delightful to his eye that he is convinced that every one is wrong-headed who refuses to accept every part of it, the atmosphere

Well-fitted schemes of thought.

of vital faith is shut out from it. Why? Because God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts: as the heavens are high above the earth so are His ways higher than our ways.

Have you ever been obliged to find your way over new country at night in a blinding thunderstorm? I remember such an experience. With every flash of light, mountain and sea, torrent and rock lay in intense light, every rough place and puddle plain in the path before us. The intervals of darkness seemed by contrast to stun the brain. Horses and riders must stumble on, the faculties of memory, of calculation, and the sense of touch numbed by the contrast. Knowledge which thus came to us, and would have had fairer play in continuous darkness, was cancelled by the more vivid knowledge derived from intermittent sight. I remember well how impossible it was to utilise the memory of each revelation in the ensuing gloom. The very horses we led stumbled on what they would otherwise have avoided.

That is not an altogether poor figure for the beginnings of the life of vital faith. As the lightning flashing over all things, gone ere the vision is conned, so is the coming of the Son of man, again and again and again, to the seeking soul; and the vision of truth and right is so keen yet so elusive, that nothing in the lower darkness seems to match with the knowledge thus gained; the groping faculties of a denser ignorance are numbed. Beginnings of vital faith.

Or, to leave the figure, we are all surely certain of this, that the heavenly vision is not consonant with the earthly vision. Long is the path, steep the ascent up the holy hill, and to those who reach the summit before passing into another life, the clear shining of truth, free from all flash and darkness, still displays no certain and compact view of the combination of the things of spirit and the things of sense.

"They were all astounded." Have you ever noticed how often that phrase comes in the Gospels? Do you think, if Jesus

came now, and went, say, to Germany, the good folk there—pious Lutherans—would not be very much astonished at His teaching, His criticism, His praise, and His denunciations? I know you do. Or if He went to Rome, or to St. Petersburg, or even to the Dissenting chapels of England? And do you really think that if He came into our rural Anglican parishes, He would blame what you think blameworthy, praise what you admire? No, you do not; you are sure that His gentle criticism would come with the force of a lightning flash, and His displeasure as the darkness of night. Nor would He pause to explain everything; that was not His way. To love God with the mind men must think for themselves, be always thinking afresh. His praise and blame alike were seed ideas, not to fructify without the prayer of reason; and the permanent function of that prayer is to offer our prejudices to God in the court of our own best judgment, and in the presence of the historic Christ.

The sacrifice of prejudice.

I am more and more sure that every pure Christian truth, every right Christian principle, is, for every generation and every man, something laid athwart our natural lives; and vital faith must take it up, carrying it to a place without the City of Desire. Faith is always called to go out from its father's house and the home of its kindred, to a land held only by promise, not by actual possession. Faith, if it be Christian, must leave father and mother, houses and lands, to follow the Christ, who never lets us rest in the dear and familiar and those things that give us a pleasing sense of sure possession. Faith in its very nature must always be sorrowing over the misfit of the higher vision with cherished prejudice, and yet rejoicing because of the transcendent glory of the vision. It must always feel poor and naked, having given away the comfortable garments of logical certainty, yet making many rich with the certainties which can never be like those "robes and furr'd gowns" of the mind which hide all discrepancies.

Faith called to leave home.

LETTER XLII

I ACKNOWLEDGE the truth of your remark that it seems almost impossible to distinguish between the bias which I own is inevitable in some degree to every mind and the prejudice of which I feel we ought to rid ourselves. Perhaps there are tests, however, by which we may discern the difference.

Our prejudices all tend to exalt us, especially our religious prejudices; but our Lord says that every one that exalts himself will be humbled, while he who humbles himself will be exalted. Many men who are not personally vain still bolster themselves out in the conceit of prejudice, instead of being willing to stand simply in the strength God gives them.

The tests of prejudice.

Again, this self-conceit of prejudice is precisely what makes all our arguments, all our instruction, saltless, wishy-washy, to those who have keenness of mind. Do you doubt it? What is it that invalidates the argument of the Dissenter against the Church to your mind? It is not your prejudice that invalidates that argument for you half so much as his. Almost every word he says appears to you to be the natural outcome of a mass of hereditary or party prejudice, which gives birth to arbitrary assumptions which you feel could not be accepted unless by a warped mind. And the same way with the "new theologian" or the atheist. You are not even interested in their arguments; you find them depressing and irritating, they do not seem to you to rise into the region of vital controversy; and this is very true of much of them. And your special contentions are invalidated for them and for the impartial observer, if such there be, in the same way. It is this tasteless, insipid result of prejudice which recurs to the

mind when we read that every sacrifice shall be salted with fire, that the children of the kingdom should be the salt of the earth.

How different is the effect when we come across a man of faith marching forward with some great principle, which he knows only "in part," which he does not attempt to trim to his own liking, some great truth which he is content to see "as in a glass darkly," knowing that it will carry him further than he can now see, while he simply says, "For myself, by this I live; for this I die daily." We see such an one pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not dismayed; always bearing about in the intellectual life the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in his intellect. And the result is, that he attracts to his side all those who have in them the power to see his vision and to live by his rule; and he forms in them no gross heart of scorn for others, for he is in very deed and truth the fellow of all who are doubtful

Knowing in part.

and perplexed, as he is the fellow of all who see a heavenly vision.

If we consider what we might call the contribution of the life of Jesus to the intellectual life of the church, we cannot think for an instant that what He offered was anything that could be rounded off, polished and planed, to suit the prejudices of any class or party, even though it were a religious class, even though it were a party in His own church. Did He, or did He not, say, "Have salt in yourselves"? When men came to Him with their questions, does His answer ever suggest a finality that could be put into words, and fitted into all the other finalities that are also in words?

Shelley's "Cloud."

You remember how Shelley, in his "Cloud," gives us in pictures that, once seen, can never be forgotten, the marvellous unrest of the moisture in the earth's atmosphere always rising toward the heart of the sun, assuming shape and colour, producing grateful shade or blasting cold, devastating snow or wel-

come rain, ever rising, ever appearing, ever falling and vanishing. Thus, and thus only, is earth made beautiful and habitable: the planets that have no moisture are dead.

That, I think, is a figure of the way our Lord intended to give truth to human reason. The substance of all revelation is final; its apprehension and interpretation never. The Christian revelation is final as regards the perfection of that Life of which, however, we on our side are always learning more. It is something given to us to which the sun of absolute truth is always appealing, drawing it upward until it assumes shape and colour and gives itself again to the practical life in blessing and banning; and again it is drawn up and built in somewhat different form and hue, but always the same in essence. Thus, if the revelation of our Lord's life is final, our conceptions of Him are never final, still less the words which half reveal and half conceal them.

Can we imagine for a moment that the life of the religious mind, the mind with

which we must love God, is something cut off from the whole universe? In our highest mental life is there nothing in common with the in-breathing and out-breathing of vital air, with the systole and diastole that keeps our pulses ever beating, with the constant destruction and constant building up of the animal frame; nothing in common with the constant output of new leaves, new flowers—never the same as leaf or flower that has come before, and the constant falling and perishing, leaving earth a waste and branches bare, tossed to inclement skies; nothing in common with the forces of detrition and attrition, by which the crust of this solid earth itself is wasted and upbuilt continually; nothing in common with the forming of the spheres, their warming and cooling, and their vast, continuous whirling in constant change, from the whence of which we cannot even dream to the whither none may know?

Our mental life in harmony with the universe.

Turn back to the smug little system of thought that each one is tempted to call

truth and right, in which we think we can go down to the deep places of life, like those water insects that make a little globule of air in which they can dive; encased in which we think we shall ascend into the highest heaven as in a balloon; out of which we look at a wrong-headed humanity, convinced, although we know it would be wrong to say it, that "these people who know not the law" can never be as favourably placed as we are. Has such a life any vital relationship with the vast pulses of the universe of God? Is it not rather the beginning of atrophy?

If, then, we must give up our pleasant abiding-places, and keep to the road, can there be no home of the soul? no green pastures and still waters? We utter this cry very naturally. When our Lord asked His disciples if they also would leave Him, Peter is represented as saying, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" There is great pathos in the words. If there were an easier Gospel we should all be well-advised to seek it; if there were

The journey of the soul.

any less arduous way to eternal life we should be fools not to take it. But this constant travel is not peculiar to the Christian life. All truth must be sought, as Christian truth is sought; all right must be reached in this way; all life springs from death, and no intellectual life worth having is anything but a constant revision and unlearning. If we are to live by the words of eternal life which Jesus spoke we must take His life as a living principle within our own, and not think His truth is ever anything which we can put on, as an academic gown, the insignia of a completed course.

And yet I think there is a home of the soul, here and now—green pastures for ever ours, and waters of comfort; but we only find them by following where He leads, always farther away from the House of Prejudice and the City of Final Assurance, through the lowlands of humility, in the country of the all-embracing sympathy of God.

The home of the soul.

LETTER XLIII

I QUITE see that the constant effort to think seems partly incompatible with the detachment of mind which loyalty to a teacher ought to bring. But the proof that we must think is that we are always in such terrible danger of drifting. The prevailing winds in the world of thought can only set us forward on our journey if we never leave the helm. In the prayer of inward silence we gaze upon the chart; in the prayer of reason we turn the helm.

The danger of drifting.

We can see what the drift of prejudice is in every department of human affairs. Class distinctions are clean and healthy headlands in our sea of life. They come to us from the past. They ought not to be permanent,

Class distinction and class prejudice.

and, in the very nature of things, they are always changing by detrition and attrition, which keeps them in wholesome accord with the universe. But the wind of class prejudice drives us inland, to a place where every class of society, high and low alike, is diseased, suffering from constant eruptions of false assumption and unkind lies; and this scrofula can only be healed by the touch of the King of kings, which is not to be had till we leave that land. Many a ship is wrecked there. It is only by constant use of the compass and labour at the helm that we can avoid that shore.

Party enthusiasm and party prejudice.

Party enthusiasm for a good cause is a strong and healthy wind—there is only one wind in the range of the sea of life more wholesome—but it is apt to merge into the trade winds of party prejudice, that set in round one set of ideas and round one mental atmosphere. The same is true of the enthusiasms of clique and coterie; affections and bonds of common interest are healthy breezes, but are quickly followed

by the cold, rude enthusiasms of mere cohesion and exclusion, which drive the ship on the coast of fully licensed selfishness, from which very few ever desire to return.

Religious faith and religious prejudice.

The best and strongest wind is the love of God; but close at its side rushes the sirocco of religious prejudice. When we set our sails to catch the breath of religious passion, it is only by unresting vigilance that we can be saved from drifting before the sirocco of prejudice on to the shore of eternal shame. In that land live those who have bound heavy burdens on other men's shoulders, and those who have beams in their eyes, and those who have caused little ones to offend, and those who have betrayed with a kiss the cause of God.

LETTER XLIV

YES, I have got *Orders and Unity*,[1] and read it. I am very glad that you came across it just when we are discussing the homage that our intellects should offer to God, because it seems to me that the reception many are giving to this book illustrates well the way in which we are very apt to shirk thought. How many read Dr. Gore's books whose lives would be all transformed if they could imbibe the spirit of love which informs them, whose practical life would be at once glorified if they could accept the doctrine concerning the poor and the rich which is taught in them, but who are giving both these things the go-by while they reinforce their favourite religious dogmas by accept-

Orders and Unity.

[1] By the Bishop of Birmingham.

ing his theology without question. How unreasonable all this is, and how unjust to the bishop who here begs them to think for themselves in matters of theology!

What is involved in thinking.

In giving an epitome of all the arguments in favour of an exclusive church doctrine the Bishop of Birmingham does not give the weighty arguments against it, and as he asks you to think for yourself, he must desire that you should read these elsewhere, as thinking would be futile unless you had both sides of the case fairly before you. To this end you ought to read Lindsay,[1] chapters i., iii., and v.; and Gwatkin,[2] vol. i.,

[1] "There is not a trace (in the Epistles of Ignatius) of sacerdotalism in the sense that the Christian ministry is a special priesthood set apart to offer a special sacrifice; there is a great deal about the sacredness of order, but not a word about the sanctity of orders. . . . There is no apostolic succession in any form whatsoever. . . . Lastly, there is no trace of diocesan rule" (*The Church and the Ministry*, by Dr. Lindsay, pp. 196-197).

[2] "Though we find no trace of episcopacy in the New Testament, it is universal a century later. . . . There is a good deal to be said for the theory that the apostles must have commanded every church to have its bishop. . . . But all this falls very far short of proof that it was an

chapters iv., xi., and xiii.; but indeed the whole of both these books will well repay your perusal, and you can hardly be said to be in a position to "think" in the matter till their views are before you.

Now, as you know, I have no desire that you should deviate from Dr. Gore's theological position in so far as it is positive; we must each take the position that seems to us most true, and put a

ordinance of the apostles. The theory accounts for some of the facts, and would be a poor theory if it did not, but it is not needed to account for them, and it is directly contradicted by another set of facts. Ignatius presses episcopacy with an urgency that cannot be exaggerated. So much the more significant is the absence of the one decisive argument that would have made all the rest superfluous. With all his urgency he never says, Obey the bishop as the Lord ordained, or as the apostles gave command. . . . The theory of an apostolic command is needless as well as unhistorical. Episcopacy was plainly the strongest form of government. . . . It was so clearly the right policy for that time that nothing short of an apostolic prohibition would have had any chance of checking it. . . . Was the bishop developed downward from the apostles? . . . The theory is quite untenable" (*Early Church History*, by Prof. Gwatkin, vol. i. pp. 289-295).

"The conception of the church was fundamentally mistaken when an unbroken succession of bishops was made the guarantee of unity" (*Ibid.* vol. i. p. 300).

greater force of spiritual life into it; but I want again to put before you that the case on the other side is such that many reasonable men will find that they cannot honestly accept this doctrine, and I want you to realise that you have not the slightest right to blame them. My question is, Can any one really say, after reading the Bishop of Birmingham's last book, that it is proved that God has spoken, making one form of church unity for ever binding? The book itself insists on bringing everything to the test of Scripture. Well, bring this to the test of Scripture.

The test of Scripture.

One interpretation is here given to figurative language of our Lord[1] which certainly is not the only possible interpretation. Certain passages are taken here and there in the books of the New Testament which again, with special interpretation and emphasis, may be said to support the doctrine of the divine authority of Episcopacy. Against all this must be set the plain fact that the doctrine

[1] *Orders and Unity*, pp. 88-89.

is nowhere plainly expressed in the New Testament. This doctrine certainly embodies ideals for the maintenance of a society and the performance of religious observance which were universally accepted and understood when our Lord lived and when the New Testament was written. There could have been no difficulty in making them explicit as a rule of the church. When the centurion said that he was a man under authority, and had men under his authority, he expressed quite simply the notion of government from above exercised by successive ranks. If this was to be the mode of government in the new church, why could it not as easily have been said, then and there, in Galilee, in the Aramaic language? Again, the conception of the priesthood as having in charge the altar which none but themselves must touch, was a most familiar idea and quite easily expressed. Our Lord Himself refers to this idea again and again. For example, He says to the cleansed leper, "Go, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy

cleansing the things which Moses commanded"; again, He refers to the shew-bread, which it was only lawful for the priests to eat, and discusses the limitation of the principle. What, then, was there to hinder our Lord making some clear statement to the apostles that they were to be the first priests of a new order, to officiate at a new altar, and that the church was to be governed by a hierarchy? If He did so, is it not very difficult to understand why all four evangelists, writing a generation afterwards, when the instruction would have been all-important, should have omitted it from their record? Why did not St. Paul, or the other writers of the New Testament, write it out quite plainly and simply? Even that Epistle which translates the Gospel into Old Testament imagery presents our Lord as the one and only officiating priest; no mention is made of a hierarchy to stand for ever after the order of the apostles. The Bishop lays great stress on the opinion of St. Ignatius; but, as Dr. Gwatkin points

out, Ignatius, with all his urgency for the episcopate, does not do the one thing that would have established his contention for ever, viz. quote the authority of our Lord or His apostles.

I think that unless your mind be most unduly prejudiced you must admit that there will probably always be large numbers of persons, eager to obey the call of the Gospel, whose sense of truth will not allow them to admit pre-eminent authority for your theory of church authority; and it must always remain with you a very serious question whether, if you adhere to the test of Scripture, you are right in excluding the bodies formed by these people from your Christian fellowship.

Our Lord's outlook for His church.

It is of course urged on your side that principles so much in the air when the church first took form stood in no need of written expression. But while this argument will not seem conclusive to the half of modern England, the currency of the ideas in the Roman Empire is quite enough to account

for the church having early grown into the form it took. A new society would naturally grow into the current ideas of autocratic government constantly pressed upon it by the Roman world, into such ideas of religious expression as were most salient in the only Scriptures it held in its hand—the Old Testament. It seems almost impossible that our Lord should not have foreseen that such would be its natural growth; but His extraordinary reticence seems to suggest that in that indefinite future in which the Gospel—vast undertaking—was to be preached to all nations, He also foresaw that His church, if it was to prevail, must not be permanently crystallised into the ideals of one government or one time. When we reflect on the silence of the apostles, on their unwillingness to bind the future by anything less than those great principles of action which can never petrify into one unchanging form, are we not almost bound to suppose that if our Lord gave them esoteric counsel on the subject it must

have been to warn them that it should be given to the church everywhere and at all times to know what she should speak, so that they need not take thought beforehand for unknown years.

We do not stand at the end of time. There is no reason to suppose that the human race has passed its childhood; and the millenniums to come are likely to carry men further and further from those ideas of secular government and corporate ceremonies which were ripe when the church first formulated her beliefs. Science tells us that it is not by rigid adherence to any outward habits, but by wonderful adaptability to new environments that man has become master of earth in every climate, and that in spite of flood and frost, famine and pestilence, with which nature has often overwhelmed him. It is quite certain that if God has given man a church which is to become universal and permanent, this church must also have the greatest possible power of correspondence with new environment. Whether

The vast future.

this power can adhere in any one exclusive society, as set before us in *Orders and Unity*, is a problem to which we must consecrate the best powers of our minds. I do not think we are at present in a position to decide it, because we are not doing the will sufficiently to know of the doctrine.

LETTER XLV

YES, of course, wherever there is vitality—in your branch of the church or any other—there will always be an attraction which will draw men. It would be a terrible state of affairs if there were not always an influx from other branches as well as from the outer world, for there is always a discontented out-going from all branches. But, in spite of the indications of the power of a strong church authority and definite tradition to attract men, you can hardly doubt that in this age the great tendency of the northern nations is in the other direction.

The northern nations.

Consider, for example, the Anglo-Saxon nations. The great trend of thought which comes out of the river of our past and flows into the illimitable future inclines us

to believe it a nobler thing to teach a man to govern himself than to govern him, a higher thing to educate him to think for himself than to think for him, and that the only way to shepherd him into being all that he might be in the civil and social order is to set him at once, from childhood, to the shepherding of his brothers. This thought is working itself out in many different ways. In every school the child who used to be a mere pawn in the hands of the master has now part of the government of the school laid on his shoulders. He is made responsible, not alone for himself, but in some degree for his fellows. The increasing supremacy of the community in municipal government and national government is an expression of the same trend of thought. It may be in a wrong direction or a right, but we must be aware that thus we are wending.

And what is true of the Anglo-Saxon race seems to be true of all the nations of Teutonic stock. It is but natural to suppose that those forms of Christianity

will thrive best which come closest to the heart of nations with these ideals of self-government and self-direction and equality in fellowship.

The Bishop of Birmingham says that indications are not wanting that sectarianism is wearying its devotees. It is undoubtedly true that men grow increasingly weary of the idea that the peculiar tenets of each sect are all-important. They are much more disposed to lay emphasis upon what is common to different forms of Christianity; varying and minor points of doctrine appear to them as proportionately negligible. Nor do they retain the idea that those errors which drove their fathers from the older form of Catholicism are fatal. But I am convinced that all this does not lead them one step toward desiring to put themselves under the yoke of the old authority. They are not seeking any huge system of assured conformity. Their very readiness to tolerate what their fathers could not tolerate arises from the conviction that the tyranny of ecclesiastical authority is a thing

of the past, and all insistence on conformity is in the very nature of things passing away.

The Bishop sketches the church to which he hopes these multitudes will return in two passages.

> We are, or ought to be, more certain that disciples of Christ are to be members of the Catholic church, holding its faith, living its life, using its sacraments and adhering to its legitimate officers, than we can be of any of the more particular doctrinal conclusions which may seem to follow from the acknowledgment of the name of Jesus.[1]

The church thus described is, of course, the church of the united Catholic tradition. He goes on to say what large tolerance should be allowed by the church in these days, especially if it could thereby embrace repentant sectaries. And he adds,

> In a visible church based on a specific divine revelation, the intelligibility and attractiveness of toleration can only be maintained where the basis of necessary faith is also clearly and unhesitatingly affirmed—where the church knows how

[1] *Orders and Unity*, p. 174.

to say as distinct a "no" to proposals which threaten its fundamental unity, as ever it did in the days of Montanism or Arianism.[1]

I feel quite sure that the millions of the energetic north are not at present returning to this sort of authority, however ideal it be. They do not want to be shepherded by any men to whom they are bound to render spiritual obedience. Their desire is for fellowship in which they may yield the voluntary reverence of the soul to those who can evoke their respect and draw forth their affections. They want, each one of them, as they feel their better natures drawn out by reverence for some and compassion for others, to take an equal part in the direction and administration of the Christian society. Self-government.

This, of course, may be all wrong. The ideal state may be aristocratic; the ideal spiritual society may be hierarchic. To settle that is not my present point. All I want to suggest is that it will be some centuries before this strong set of the

[1] *Orders and Unity*, p. 203.

northern races toward equality and independence can have reached its climax and be ready, if ever, to return to something more in consonance with the Catholic ideal. During these centuries it is surely better they should have some form of Christianity rather than none. If it were true, as the Bishop says,[1] that Jesus Himself and the apostles clearly commanded the hierarchy as the only form of Christianity, and thus virtually banned any other, in what evil case would these northern nations now be who for the most part are preparing to carry their Christianity with them to the utmost extent of their bold experiment in self-government and freedom of thought! If it be true that our Lord and His apostles left a solemn charge to the church that its government was always to be such as was adapted to the converts of the first centuries under the breaking up of the Roman Empire, it seems to me that the great mass of the Teutonic nations would now have no choice but to accept a

[1] *Orders and Unity*, pp. 132, 133, and elsewhere.

form of Christianity which they cannot now assimilate, or reject the faith altogether.

I want you to consider that point to which I have before referred—the tendency to emphasise common ground. The conviction has taken hold of multitudes of earnest-minded men that the doctrines held in common by the different Christian bodies are more likely to be essential, are more sure to embody truth, than doctrines on which there is no agreement. This fact is of great significance. It involves the letting loose of a vast tide of thought and energy which used to expend itself in fret and friction around emphatic negations. Whereunto it will grow, and what use God can make of it, we cannot even begin to imagine; but I pray you to consider this—to call it by a long ugly name, such as "undenominationalism," and to beat it with the largest stick we can get hold of, will not alter the strength of its onrush in the least degree, while such action may have a stunting effect upon our own natures.

"Undenominationalism."

I think among many of us there is a distinct confusion of thought about this vast current of conviction. The mind of a man thus affected necessarily feels less antagonism for other Christian bodies than his father did, but he does not hold less definitely and less earnestly the positive truth he retains, and he does not necessarily feel less affection for whatever Christian society he happens to belong to by inheritance or conviction. The dearest ties of a Christian society are not cemented by negations and hatreds; they are matters of faith and aspiration, of use and wont and mutual help. The Methodist, for example, may hold with entire loyalty the main evangelical tenets, may be entirely devoted to the system of class meetings, of itinerant preachers, and of a social fellowship which gives him the freedom of Methodist society wherever he goes; and all this may be just as strong and just as earnest within him although he have no desire to teach his children, or to hold himself, any doctrine to which almost the whole

of Christendom would not agree. The same is to be said to-day of thousands among Presbyterians and other bodies. Side by side with the breaking down of belief in sect barriers as essential is the increasing emphasis upon the need of corporate life, of co-operation and fellowship in every department of life. I have heard church people talk as if a man who did not think it wicked to leave his own religious society for another was necessarily drifting into vagueness, a mere promiscuous frequenter of sermons. They have so hopelessly confused faith and denunciation, love and hatred, in religious matters that they cannot conceive a man loving God and His Christ passionately unless he condemn some other sort of Christian, loving his fellows and being closely bound up with them unless he denounce every other fellowship. Yet how unreasonable is this inversion of the truth!

Whether the increased largeness of sympathy which increasing neglect of peculiar doctrines makes possible will react on the

present organisation of existing societies, and in what way it will react, we can no more tell than we can tell whence the wind will come to-morrow and whither it will go.

It seems to me of all things most futile to pass strictures upon a great stream of tendency like this. It is wiser to refrain from judgment upon it. If it be of man it will ultimately be overthrown; but if it be of God it will roll on with resistless and cumulative power, and those who fight against it will only stultify themselves.

LETTER XLVI

No, indeed, I have no opinion at all as to how the "sort of church unity" you call mine may be brought about; nor have I much idea what my "sort of church unity" is. You often seem to think that I have a cut-and-dried opinion up my sleeve to give in exchange for any I urge you to reconsider—as if my mind were a linen collar, nothing without the starch of fixed opinions.

But, seriously, I think that we have none of us the slightest right to expect to know what God may be willing to do for us until we are ready to live with a very different sort of faith and enthusiasm to that which we now exhibit.

I wonder if it has struck you, as it strikes me sometimes, that there are certain things

in our way of life so obviously wrong and absurd that nothing but familiarity and the idea that they cannot be bettered could possibly reconcile us to them. And when one asks oneself on what this idea that they cannot be bettered rests, the only answer is, lack of faith. In contrast with what went before them, perhaps, or what we assume would be if they were not, they appear to us fairly good, and we draw no contrast between what they are and what God would certainly do for us if we refused to go on in the wrong way. We have not the least faith that God can do better for us, or arrange anything better, than we can foresee. We will not take a step to dissociate ourselves from what is clearly wrong in the light of the teaching of the religion we profess, until we see where it is going to lead us.

Conservatism of old Adam.

There is, for example, that matter of party politics. The majority of the members of our church, lay and clerical,—and, for the matter of that, of other Christian bodies

too—receive nearly all their information and impressions about political affairs from the party press, and from the press of one party only. What could be more absurd than for a judge who must pronounce upon a case to restrict his hearing to the advocates of one side? and not merely to make up his mind and pronounce verdict and sentence upon that, but to allow his feelings to become so inflamed that in his spare hours he could do little else than pour abuse upon the other side? Yet this is, at times, the common condition of Englishmen, and, what is worse, of Englishwomen otherwise pure-minded. Our ill conditions.

It is quite true that we do not see how to carry on government by party without this intolerable abuse of reason and neighbourliness, and our minds are so feeble that we cannot even imagine a better form of government than government by party. But because we do not see how God is going to bring His kingdom about, is that any excuse for

acquiescing in a wrong that involves such shocking mental and moral obliquity? Are we, in reality, Christians at all if we fail to believe that in some sense the kingdom is always at hand if we would repent of our evil ways and believe that unforeseen good will come with our abandonment of them? We must know perfectly well in our moments of calm reason that the half-truths of the political party journal, or, what is worse, the religious party journal, often have the venom of falsehood in them to a worse degree even than if the circumstances they recite were pure inventions. We are not ignorant of this—not one of us—because whenever we take up a party paper which advocates the other side we are vividly conscious both of the venom and the falsehood, so that we ought to be perfectly aware that the same method obtains in the sheets we habitually peruse with such relish.

The newspapers are not to blame. They are bound to cater for the taste of the people, for they live by the people. They

are, in fact, each one of them, the literary presentment of a crowd spirit or a mob spirit. You and I know very well that there are men who rise far above the surge of party conflict, but, curiously enough, they are very rarely the notably religious! I have pitched on this particular matter because it is one in which religion seems to be neither monitor nor moderator, but the worst of offenders.

What excuse can we find for the lack of a little honest straightforward thinking? for the self-indulgence that will not allow us to speak or make a serious stand against the drift of custom and opinion about us? and for an entire lack of faith that it would be of the slightest use?

In this whole complicated question I find, speaking for myself, my life guided much more by prejudice than by Christian principle and Christian faith. I cannot for one moment believe that if in the prayer of reason we consistently and earnestly brought this evil, as far as it has crept into our own lives, as far as we

Need of unlimited hope.

can see it dimly in the life of the community, to the test of the heart-searching exactions and glorious promises of the Gospel, we should not very soon find with the temptation a way of escape. It is never personal escape alone that we can seek; the church —whatever be our connotation of the term—the church ought to be dearer to us than our personal sanctity. And when we lift it up to God in prayer, we can never seriously believe that transgression of the very laws of Christian existence can be a means of the church's gain.

There must be a better way of gaining information about national affairs than through mediums tinged by political or religious spite; and yet how slow we are to support an independent press! There must be a better form of government than the bi-party system, in which no cause can stand on its own merits. There must be a better form of representation than that which compels a man to vote for one of two men when he approves of neither; and yet how ready we are to set aside as Utopian

any scheme of reform like that of "proportional representation"! To say there is no better way in such-like matters is, I think, to give a blank denial to the central thought of the Gospel, "Repent, for the kingdom is at hand."

LETTER XLVII

ONE day just before this last election I got into conversation with a poor but decent man in a railway carriage. He was ignorant and excited. We got on well until I inadvertently betrayed my religion. Then he asked sharply, "Do you belong to the Church of England?"—adding in a moment, "and you seem honest!" He sighed and said, "Well I'm sorry to make the remark, but the only explanation must be that you're not intelligent."

I thought I had got hold of some bigoted Dissenter or freethinker, and was prepared for the usual arguments; but I was quite mistaken; his indictment was made on purely practical grounds. He said he had a small shop in a country town, that when he began openly to do political work for the

Labour Party many of his best customers, who were "Primrose women," forsook him. These "Primrose women" were all church-women, so he said that this circumstance had caused him to think about the Church.

His view was that the Church always took the opinion of Dives as to what Lazarus really needed. The Church ideal of charity was the ideal of Dives—the broken bits from the table of luxury—what could be spared from comfortable incomes. The Church never got at the real mind or the real needs of Lazarus, because it always stood shoulder to shoulder with Dives and looked out of his windows. He said roughly that if Church folk were honest and could comfortably believe that it was Jesus who would decide whether they were saved or damned in the next world, "they must be uncommon fools."

The church dining with Dives.

While I was endeavouring to bring him to a better mind I was interested to find that by "the Church" he meant the bulk of the laity. He attributed to the clergy

an amiable desire to see justice done, but he regarded them as pensioners of Dives, frightened to tell him the truth. He had a rather keen sympathy with their position, because he himself had had to choose between principle and his pocket.

Now we have all come across some such reproach as this; and, however much mistaken this man may be, there can be no doubt that all up and down the country poor men who think for themselves are saying that the Church of England is the ally of Dives in all his public and social action, although few are rough enough to suggest that the Church may be co-heir to his inheritance. All I want to say is that whatever it is that gives the honest poor this impression would probably not be there if we did not neglect the prayer of reason.

I have myself known rich people who habitually thought of our Lord as standing to represent the poor in their need of charity, but never in their need of justice, or of education, or of a voice in the State. The moment the claim of the poor is for what

may raise them to conditions of greater power, there, they seem to think, our Lord would dissociate Himself from the poor and no longer say, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to me."

That parable of Dives undoubtedly comes to us from the bosom of the early church, and in spite of the common dogmatic explanation of the bourgeois mind, I think it undoubtedly represents the indignation of our Lord at the mere possession of superfluous riches. We may infer from that what His anger at their abuse must be!

LETTER XLVIII

THERE is an adage that is sometimes given in good books as a counsel of perfection, that every doubtful point should be decided as we least like to decide it. How very different is this from the demand of our Lord that our inclinations should be one with His! It makes a moral quality of mere disinclination. It is intended to be a safe balance to natural bias in our judgment, and to a certain extent it will operate thus; but it carries in its heart the principle, not of love, but of asceticism; its saving characteristic is that few are likely to carry it out too rigorously. The bias of devotion to our Lord leaves free play to all good and natural inclination as it can rise to embrace His purposes; those pur-

Inclination to be brought into captivity to Christ.

poses which it is the function of the prayer of reason to seek.

The command to love God with the mind is the eternal basis of the prayer of reason; and I am much inclined to think that when we honestly bring that prayer to God in the presence of Him who, we believe, has taken something of our own nature into the unseen, we always hear the same drastic counsel of perfection. "Love your neighbour quite as well as yourself," or "Give away all that you have to the poor." "Desert the dead; desert the living." It is perplexing, because we know that it is in our possessions, our sacred obligations, and our affections, that we must glorify God. We begin to understand it when we realise the folly of that common conceit, that a man can use his reason apart from his other faculties, and decide questions which involve the welfare of his neighbour or of a whole nation of neighbours without any bias of interest. I am sure this is not true. Just as every historian comes to the documents of the

past with some interpretative prepossession, so every man comes to every practical issue of personal or national duty with an interpretative wish, which will father his thought. Yet a right judgment is as necessary to goodness, as imperative for Christian goodness, as good intention.

All the same, we cannot get rid of bias —bias in our judgments of one sort or another we must have, it is the way God has made us. This, I think, seems to be more true, not less, because in every generation there may be some rare minds —as, for example, that of the late Mr. Henry Sidgwick — who appear almost to rise to the impartial use of reason. How severely even such men train themselves for the exercise of mere reason! How they stand out in contrast to other men! Does not the very contrast show us what we are?

To love one's brother as oneself, to seek religious detachment, had been the ideal of good men for ages before our Lord, and it had not been realised just because

men had always seen the good of the brother through the spectacles of their own desire. The rich young man, being a good Jew, fed the hungry and clothed the naked, and probably thought it far better for the poor that he should keep his possessions and continue his almsgiving! But the point of the counsel he received probably was, not the ideal destination of riches, but that we, being creatures of bias, must obtain a new bias which will lead us to judge fairly between ourselves and our brother. It is just this that true devotion to Jesus gives, because He took care never to be in any position on earth which would make sympathy with Him in accord also with self-interest. The enthusiast and innovator who refuses all earthly power; the associate of sinners; the guest of the gatherers of unjust taxes; the poor man; the hungry man; the homeless man; the victim of popular persecution; the condemned criminal—it is with these He has for ever taken His stand; to these He directs our tenderest love, saying, "Whosoever there

is among you who will not follow Me in his sympathy with these, he cannot be My disciple."

In doing so He certainly points us to a perpetual revision of our prejudices as they affect our ethical and religious notions, as they affect our social distinctions and duties of citizenship, as they affect our praise and blame of public characters, and our efforts to reform criminal law. This bias of love for all outcast classes of the community can alone ensure our justice toward them; for unless we be ourselves of the outcast, our natural bias will always lead us to judge that social conditions which suit us must be best on the whole for those less favoured.

Bias of keen sympathy needed to make us just.

Even if what is best for the whole body politic must be best in the end for all its members, it does not follow that one class may not need to divest itself of rights for a time on behalf of another class. Democracy seems, for the moment, to be a bad form of

Ought not the few to suffer for the many?

government for the masses, but it is one of their best means of education; the rich can choose their experience, but the poor depend upon some experience in self-government for the development of their powers. In that case, are those that, for the hour, could govern better to submit gladly to being ill governed for the sake of that "divine, far-off event"—a self-disciplined proletariat? Legislative and commercial principles, which are best for the aggrandisement of wealth, may not be best for the elevation of the poor worker. The interests of capital and labour are very often opposed; even if they are in the long run identical, one or the other must probably at times suffer loss for the other's gain: ought not the few to suffer for the many? Or, again, the interests of all the labourers may in the long run be identical, but in times of temporary stress they are antagonistic. The action of a trades-union bent on providing regular work at good wages for all its members may directly depress the conditions of labour outside its ranks. In a strike or

lock-out this opposition of interests comes to a head, and the attitude of the unionists toward the non-unionists is often the tyranny of the powerful over the weak. Is, then, the immediate good of the aristocracy of labour to be sacrificed to the welfare of the less skilled and less strong? Take another instance. It may be, for the time, to the interest of the well-to-do and respectable that crimes against property should be as heavily punished as crimes against men and women, but it is certainly not best for the criminal class. Is security of possession for the rich to be made of secondary importance to security of person for the weak and defenceless? Then we have the whole large question of national glory and the ethics of war—how far a nation is justified in treating a neighbouring nation other than as a man should treat his neighbour.

If as citizens we allow ourselves so far to sink in prejudice as to suppose that such matters were well settled in the past, or to suppose that it is not our business to alter

them, if we do not bring our judgment to bear on all these matters, in the perpetual offering of the prayer of our reason, we can hardly lay claim to Christian character. Certainly, without this travail of soul we have no right as Christians to an opinion on any of these matters. The finding of the truth will never be easy. We believe the revelation of Christian truth to have been given once for all; the revelation was the personality of our Lord. But it is ours to understand.

Truth only reached by travail of soul.

LETTER XLIX

I QUITE agree with you; while the belief that God must hear and reward all true prayer is the essential of all true religion, the Incarnation and the Atonement are the basis of all Christian hope for the improvement of the world. It is one aspect of these doctrines that I have been blunderingly trying to express in these letters, although it is no part of my design to write dogmatic theology to you. Is it not implied in our Lord's Messianic consciousness that, after having been obedient to God's law of love even unto death, He would become a Being able to communicate, perfectly at once with God and man? The whole doctrine of His participation, both in the creative and the created nature, comes

"The new and living way" through the veil into the unseen.

in here. As man He was conscious of a unique access to God and to the spirit world: may He not have known that by the achievement of His life and death He would literally become a "new and living way" by being able to hold constant communication with those who sought His mediation, able to express in human thought the love of God, the will of God, and also to translate the power of the hosts of the Lord into the common consciousness of men?

It seems to me that it is because we conventional folk, individually and corporately, have sadly neglected the joy of the hearkening element in prayer—forgetting that we have in the heavens a great Interpreter—shamefully neglected to bring our reason into the court of prayer, that we are faced so often with what seems a crude and blank contradiction of our most familiar hopes.

After our Lord's death communication with the unseen world became the normal and unvarying experience of the Christian

communities. The belief in this experience, like the vitality it imparts, has never faltered, never changed very much in even the lives of the smallest and the humblest from the time of the Acts of the Apostles to the latest records of progressive Christian missions.

Immediate apprehension of God's will,

We are nowadays far too much inclined to minimise the part that direct practical revelation played in the unparalleled missionary success of the first generation of Christians; the epitome of the whole age is, "God, who said, Let light shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The past apprehension of Christ by sense became a small matter compared with the inward, spiritual sight which was the common property of the church. I feel that it is to this condition of the early church, not so much to its beliefs and practices, that we need to return —to the expectation of constant, direct enlightenment.

distinctive of the early church,

The joy of the psalmist in God and in communion with Him had already, as I have suggested, had much in common with the communion of a child with a dearly-loved father, or the joy of a dog in the protection of a master, whose mere going and coming he seeks to anticipate. With the death of our Lord the communion became more practical.

Yesterday my friend, G——, returned to England, and last night I attempted to talk to him a hundred miles away over the telephone. For some minutes, though I knew he was there and could recognise his voice, we could not exchange question and answer owing to the buzz and babel all along the line between us. Then the line was cleared, and I could understand what he said. Is not that rather like the change in man's conversation with God brought about by our Lord's death? God's voice had always been real, always direct, to listening hearts; but it then became more distinct, conveying not only the joyful sense of companionship, but the

clear voice of practical direction for every-day life.

Since the very beginning of the church this has constantly been the kind of connection between the Christian and the unseen world; as to-day the central thought of every lonely missionary upon the frontiers of christendom is Christ, both God and man, writing the mind of God, not in ink upon paper that can be reduplicated, but in life that is always, everywhere, exquisitely unique, yet always, everywhere, organically related to all other life.

and of the missionary life.

It was once my somewhat wearisome duty to read missionary magazines from end to end to an invalid. At the end of last century the average missionary, whatever he might do and wherever he might be, always wrote in one style and reported the same class of activities. I would start mechanically on the report of each station, and in a minute would lose all remembrance of whether I was reading about Japan or Brazil. The monotony to me was

oppressive: but out of it all grew in my mind one fixed fact, and that was that when any missionary was in doubt he betook himself to prayer of one form or another and was quickly satisfied that he had a practical answer. We find the same thing in the early Jesuit missions, in the lives of the great and small Reformers, and indeed in every record of Christian enterprise from the Acts of the Apostles onward.

Where, then, is the proof that this is not merely mental automatism? It lies in the gradual conformity of every diverse sort of Christian missionary work to the same principles of loving adaptability, unflinching endurance, statesmanlike organisation, and unceasing enterprise; which indicates the influence of one Master Mind upon men in different organisations and in every degree of isolation. It lies also in the increasing sense of the "communion of saints," and of the unseen powers of good and evil which commonly characterise the missionary's outlook.

Where is our Church glorious?—On the mission-field; in the slum. The enterprise, the zeal, the statesmanship, and above all the love of God and humanity, with which missionary work has everywhere gone forward in the hands of men whose natural endowments are not above the average, is the one miracle which attests the truth of the word. Of course present, like past, history is always interpreted with a prepossession; but I, who did not start with a prepossession in favour of Christian missions, but rather felt at first that every religion was almost as good as another, and that martyrdom was only worth while in the cause of liberty, have gradually come to believe that the facts of missionary enterprise in our age are the best explanation, the best criticism, the only means to adequate appreciation, of all church history; and that the proof of the constant willingness and unique power of our Lord to translate the eternal love and wisdom to the humblest creature who will use His

Conquest of human lives the one proof of the word.

force for the love of humanity, lies in the triumphant aggressions of Christianity, not only where religions of a lower type prevail, but in the worse heathenism of the city slum. The force of this aggression consists not in the number of converts who accrete themselves to this or that form of mission worship, but in the lives of such converts as compel imitation.

LETTER L

YES, we agree that our Church is glorious on the mission-field; but surely the Church of England has also another function, "to build Jerusalem on England's green and pleasant land"; and it is certainly not yet built. Except in a few parishes, where a spirit of fellowship is generating real power, our English Christianity lacks power. If Jesus was divine the drama of the Gospel is eternal, always enacting itself, and in each generation it is true for the sons of faith that some of them will not taste death till they see the power of the kingdom of God. But these are men who believe, as Jesus believed, in the power of God to destroy what is evil and to recreate, to pull down strongholds, to bring ideals into the

Building Jerusalem.

captivity of Christ, to perform, for the faithful and the lowly that which no man can forecast. How can we put any limit to the power of lives rooted thus in the power of God?

A little while ago you were grumbling at certain critics who are proclaiming that Jesus Christ merely accepted the eschatological views of His time. I have been thinking that if you reject their theory on the ground that He was greater than all time, you will find your rejection a sword that cuts two ways; for many things in our code of ethics are founded on the belief that He accepted the whole ethic of His time, save as He explicitly denied it. All the belief that martial violence is a virtue, that resistance to aggression is justifiable, hangs upon this. All our belief that the accumulation and hoarding of wealth is justifiable hangs upon this. It seems to me that these large assumptions are fundamental matters which, in the perpetual prayer of reason, we must bring to God, willing to accept His revision.

We deny the originality of Jesus when it suits us.

We might be more satisfied that we are in the right way if England were Christianised. How do matters stand? I suppose that Christian ideals receive more consideration, and on the whole a closer obedience, from the "upper" class than from the "lower." Unless they be in some exceptional way of life, they have more time, and an ample life breeds amiable intention. If the disposition be good, leisure, refinement of desires, education, all things that go to make the best of any life, must be aids to the Christian life. I certainly think, then, that in this class, the overwhelming majority of which belong to the Church, we ought to get, on the whole, the highest degree of English Christianity. If it is not so, our Church is in a bad way, for certainly the bulk of its laity belong to the "upper" class and to those who model their ideas upon it.

Among these is it any exaggeration to say that their noblest theme is war? I think it is on that subject that they attain to the highest elevation of sentiment, the

greatest degree of disinterested and heroic feeling. England's glory, England's greatness, means, to the most of them, her sword and her power to wield it. Her trade, her religion, will, of course, follow the flag; but the flag is, for the most part, the highest theme. When we come to subjects less elevated I think I am not wrong in saying that pomp and circumstance and money are the objects of our most fixed desires. They are, for the vast majority of church-folk, the chief good of existence. It is a matter of degree; many of us are content with moderation for ourselves, but for our children what is better than honour and wealth? Piety, of course, is always supposed to be their attendant! Then, as to the boast in Christ which St. Paul desiderated, it is certainly there; for we are confident that all we have to do with is reformed. The Church—yes; once it was lax, but now it is reformed; and the same with our laws, our machinery of law, our manners and customs. Our

Our national ideals.

charities, too, are reformed! Our generosity is phenomenal. Out of our abundance what do we not give to the destitute? The rain of our surplus pence goes far to make them all beggars. We are sure that we are the most Christian of nations. We are sure that, as a Church, we have higher standards of piety and morals than any other Christian body. Thus we make our boast in the Lord! Are the humble made glad thereby?

That is where the test of this sort of religion comes in. For this "upper" class of which I speak—which, I freely concede, probably represents the high-water mark of our Christianity—this class has been for generations our governing class. It possesses the greater part of the wealth of the nation; it has made laws and unmade them; it has had power to license and prohibit; and how have we built up our Christian state? To-day, upon English soil, hundreds and thousands of her sons and daughters, in grinding poverty, are bringing forth stunted children to a hopeless slavery of vice and disease, and

degrading conditions of labour that has neither heart nor thought nor a decent living in it. Everywhere, to enrich the already rich, more alcohol is offered to the poor than is good for them. Everywhere, from our elementary schools, some seventy-five per cent of the boys go out into the world to learn no trade, and so never attain to economic independence. Everywhere the blight of hopelessness is over our prisons and poorhouses; our only official treatment for crime and destitution is not remedial. From one-tenth of our people the moan of starvation may always be heard; and in the class just above them, the men who work hardest and make the most heroic sacrifices of which their life is capable, are unable to give their children a healthy upbringing and a decent start in life. For more than three millions of the people of Great Britain no proper fulfilment of the duties of citizenship, or parentage, or religion, is possible.

Our national institutions.

Well, is it God's fault, or is it our fault,

or is it no one's fault? If Christianity meant to us an absorbing passion of love to God and man, to Jesus Christ, and for His sake to the hungry and the sick and the imprisoned, would not love have found a way out of these evils long ago? Love has always one very clear characteristic; she prefers to give rather than to get, to lavish her very life rather than save it. She will labour endlessly rather than be idle; she will find a way to benefit the object of her heart.

Although there may be considerable doubt as to Scriptural authority for debateable doctrines, there is none at all about the necessary supremacy of the passion of love. Consider the three Evangelists, St. Paul, the author of the Johannine writings, the authors of the other epistles! Does any one doubt that they, each and all, make the lavishing of life—all its powers and possessions—for the world, for the brethren, the test of faith in Christ? The commandments rise in our minds more quickly than we can say them. Can we read St. Luke's record

in chap. vi. 27, 28, and doubt that the spirit and power that Jesus came to impart, if exercised by the adherents of our Church, would have long ago remedied our national evils? To love those who would take from us, offering no resistance, giving more than is asked, giving all that we in their place would desire, despairing of no man, judging no man, giving to the unthankful, looking for nothing in return but the approval of God—if this spirit had been carried by the rich classes into our class warfare, are we not bound as Christians to believe that it could have opened for itself safe channels of exercise? Is St. Paul less exacting than our Lord? Without love that knows no limit, he cries, your life is nothing more than a hollow noise. And the author of the great Gospel of love and the Epistle of Love, is he less urgent? The burden of his cry is that God is love, that God as love animated Christ to give Himself for our salvation; and that we do not share in that salvation unless by the

The consensus of New Testament writers.

same spirit we give ourselves in love to man. "Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?"[1] The Epistle of James, the Epistle to the Hebrews, what excuse for our national institutions do we find in them? If a brother or sister be naked or destitute of daily food, and ye give them not the things needful for the body, what doth it profit? "Faith without works is dead."[2] Or, "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them, them that are evil entreated as being yourselves also in the body."[3] Can we imagine for a moment that the spirit that breathes in these utterances could for one day be satisfied with our poorhouses, our schools, our police-courts, our prisons? Can we suppose that teachers who urged

[1] 1 John iii. 16, 17. [2] James ii. 15 *ff.*
[3] Hebrews xiii. 3.

such application of love on a church struggling and persecuted would have been satisfied with a church in power, a state church, which tolerated institutions in which misery is bound to go on multiplying itself? No, let us retain our sanity, if we must give up our Christianity!

National pride, class distinction, privilege, pleasure—these, I suppose, have a place in the Christian life if subservient to the indwelling Spirit of Love; but when the Spirit is held subservient to these, what shall we say? Let us look facts in the face and admit that the Christianity of our Lord and His apostles is not, generally taught, let alone enforced, by our Church. There are Churchmen who teach it, and the power of God is with them. The love that is being lavished on any attempt at the apostolic ideal of fellowship and brotherhood is potent, but it animates the heart of the very few. In them it is so potent that we can well see that if the church were afire with it, English institutions would be transformed in a few years.

The Spirit of God in bonds.

LETTER LI

Impracticable counsel.

IT seems impracticable, you say. Yes, certainly, you are right—in forecast quite impracticable. So was the Gospel of Jesus from the beginning; so was the task to which those few fishermen addressed themselves at Pentecost; so was the conversion of the Gentile world by St. Paul. What power was it that taught these men "to turn the world upside down"?

"We do not want England turned upside down." No, indeed, I quite agree with you, we do not want it—but I think God does. As long as thousands of us are living rich and idle, our whole lives a mere economic waste—as long as millions of us are underfed, no opportunity from infancy to age to live decently—as long as this is the case

I think there can be no doubt that God wants England to be turned upside down. At what infinite cost did Christ win for us the brand of Heaven's own fire! It was our privilege to have lit with this torch of the Spirit such fire of love on every altar in the land, that all who partook of the altar would in very truth have liked better to give than to get, and would have given life itself to raise the fallen and extend large opportunity to all. Instead of this, have we not trodden out the torch? Because we have not the single eye we cannot see the way before us; but this we know, He who gave the fire is waiting for us—waiting at the bar of God!

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